

FIRST APPEARANCE OF BUFFALO BILL

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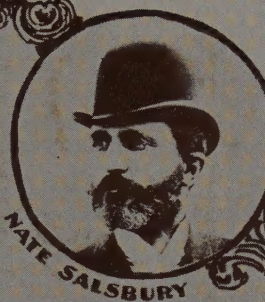
THE MAN ON HORSE OF 1795.
FROM THE SEINE TO THE NEVA,
FROM THE PYRAMIDS TO WATERLOO.

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NEW ENLARGED
AND GREATER

WILD WEST

RIDERS.



ATING FAME
HEUR-
ALO BILL.

THE MAN ON HORSE OF 1895.
FROM THE YELLOW STONE TO THE DANUBE.
FROM VESUVIUS TO BEN NEVIS.

A Study In Heroics

THE MAKING OF BUFFALO BILL

RICHARD J. WALSH

In collaboration with
MILTON S. SALSURY

People who saw William F. Cody say there never was a hero who so much looked the part. Certainly no individual, before the movies and radio, ever had such effective personal exploitation. For nearly fifty years he was continually before the public, in the pages of dime and nickel novels, on the boards of blood-and-thunder melodramas and in that astounding Wild West Show that toured from the tank towns to the thrones of Europe.

Reports had him bearing the scars of one hundred and thirty-seven wounds from Indians—yet his wife testified that he had but one wound. General Phil Sheridan often said that Buffalo Bill had slain as many Indians as any white man that ever lived—and Crawford, who scouted with him and joined his theatrical company, growled in answer to such statements, "Cody never received a scratch and never killed an Indian."

Somewhere between these extremes lurks the truth about the prowess of the last of the great scouts and the personification of the passing glories of the frontier. Here at last are the true facts, so much more romantic than the fiction, and the more romantic because they are credible. It is good fun to contrast the heroic with the historic, and the reader will thrill to the numerous quotations from contemporary sources—nickel and dime novels, show programs, newspapers, documents, official records and correspondence.



"The finest figure of a man that ever sat a steed"

THE MAKING OF BUFFALO BILL

By RICHARD J. WALSH

In Collaboration with Milton S. Salsbury

A STUDY IN HEROICS

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To

JOHNNY BAKER

THE AMERICAN MARKSMAN

FORMERLY "THE COWBOY KID"

FOSTER SON OF COLONEL CODY, DEVOTED TO HIM IN
LIFE AND LOYAL TO HIS MEMORY AS CUSTODIAN OF
HIS GRAVE AND THE MEMORIAL MUSEUM ON LOOKOUT
MOUNTAIN, THIS BOOK IS RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED.

FOREWORD

THIS book was started as a happy collaboration. It was completed as a solitary task, for before the first chapter was written Milton Salsbury died.

He was the son of Nate Salsbury, Cody's partner in the Wild West Show. He conceived the book and fixed its point of view toward Buffalo Bill, brought to it a large collection of data and opened the most important 'avenues' of other information. Almost all of the actual research was necessarily left for me to do, the writing is wholly mine and, consequently, the responsibility for all defects is mine.

Milton Salsbury's wife, Ethel, and his sister, Rebecca Salsbury Strand, have been painstaking in reading the text and in giving advice. Fortunately, before Milton's death, I had cast our material into the condensed form of a series of articles, which had his approval. These were not published, but were made available to Mr. W. B. Courtney for reference in the preparation of his recent articles in *Collier's Weekly*.

Our purpose was not so much to tell the story of a life as to study the processes by which a semi-legendary figure was created. Unlike those popular heroes who grow in folklore fortuitously, Buffalo Bill was the subject of the deliberate and infinitely skilful use of publicity.

Bill Cody himself is well worth knowing. Fictionized versions of his life have been appearing for half a century; to add another such would be worse than futile. We wanted to find and tell the true facts, which seemed to us much more dramatic than the fiction, and more romantic because they are credible. It was good fun to

contrast the heroics with the historic, and in the hope that the reader will share the fun we quote a great deal from contemporary sources—nickel and dime novels, show programs, newspapers, documents, correspondence and the like.

The extensive scrap-books and records kept by the elder Salisbury during his twenty years' association with Cody formed the basis of our work.

Our largest indebtedness, however, is to Johnny Baker, the foster son of Cody and custodian of the museum at his grave. Mr. Baker placed at our disposal hundreds of letters, documents and photographs not hitherto available to any biographer. On various occasions he submitted to questioning by the hour, and he has replied to long lists of inquiries by mail, always with patience and precision. Without his guidance it would have been impossible to correct various misconceptions and to gain a sympathetic understanding of the real Cody. No other person ever knew Cody as well as Baker did, or loved him better.

The executors of the Cody estate courteously gave us permission to quote letters written by Cody. Neither they nor Johnny Baker, of course, share any of the responsibility for our interpretation.

Others who helped greatly by lending documents or giving information were: Mr. William E. Connelley, Secretary of the Kansas Historical Society, who also was so kind as to read the proofs; Captain Luther North; the Misses Cooke, daughters of the late Louis E. Cooke; Dr. Wilberforce Eames; Mr. Carl Jones; Mrs. Margaret Pilcher Vaughan, reference librarian of the St. Louis Public Library; the Adjutant-General of the War Department; Mr. Louis H. Fox and other members of the staff of the New York Public Library; various members of the

FOREWORD

staffs of the Congressional Library and the New York Historical Society, and Dr. Frank P. O'Brien, whose remarkable collection of dime novels has been highly useful. Doubtless there were others whom Milton Salsbury consulted but whose names I did not get.

My own gratitude is due to Mr. Charles Merz for reading and criticizing the manuscript, to Miss E. M. Haslam for preparing it and for her thorough care of the valuable collections entrusted to me, and to my wife for assistance in research.

The map on the lining paper at the back of the book will help the reader find his way through the Buffalo Bill country.

RICHARD J. WALSH.

Pelham, New York.

May 1, 1928.

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THE MAKING OF BUFFALO BILL

THE MAKING OF BUFFALO BILL

CHAPTER I

LAST OF THE GREAT SCOUTS

"'Mercy is a name not fit for your lips, you woman-killing fiend!' shouted Bill. . . .

"Face to face, knee to knee, and hand to hand, Raven Feather and Buffalo Bill met. Twice the borderman parried the deadly thrusts of the wily chief—twice again the steel of the savage drank his blood, but weak from twenty wounds, the Indian's eyes were not sure, and soon the knife of the brave borderman reached his body with a fearful thrust. . . .

"Buffalo Bill, anxious as he was to hurry back to his loved ones, had to delay to have the blood staunched which poured from many a sad gash in his noble frame."

From a nickel novel of the eighteen-seventies.

INSPIRED newspaper report sometimes said that the body of Buffalo Bill bore scars of one hundred and thirty-seven wounds earned in encounters with Indians. Yet his wife testified that a bullet which furrowed his scalp in a skirmish with the Sioux gave the one and only wound he ever received.

Captain Jack Crawford, who scouted with him and joined his theatrical company, finally went so far in jealousy as to growl, "Cody never received a scratch and never killed an Indian." But General Phil Sheridan was

often quoted as having said that Buffalo Bill had slain as many Indians as any white man that ever lived.

Somewhere between these extremes lurks the truth about the prowess of the man who was hailed as the last of the great scouts and the very personification of the passing glories of the frontier.

Man and boy, William F. Cody lived the whole span of the winning of the West. He first crossed the Missouri when it was the jumping-off place of civilization. He lived to see the plains crisscrossed with barbed wire and hard roads, to hear the airplanes zoom over the passes where the prairie-schooners had lumbered, to promote a canal and say proudly, "Ain't I the father of irrigation?", to own roadside inns in the mountains and even to project a dude ranch.

Three generations on two continents welcomed his Wild West Show with a fervor never aroused by any circus before or since, or by its thin latter-day echo, the rodeo. In his heyday Curtis Guild, later governor of Massachusetts, wrote this tribute: "Tall beyond the lot of ordinary mortals, straight as an arrow, not an ounce of useless flesh upon his limbs, but every muscle firm and hard as the sinews of a stag, with the frank kindly eye of a devoted friend, and a natural courtly grace of manner which would become a marshal of France, Buffalo Bill is from spur to sombrero one of the finest types of manhood this continent has ever produced."

No one who saw his show in Europe or America could ever forget that first throbbing moment when he reined in his great white horse under the spotlight, or in the warm afternoon sun, swept off his sombrero and belowed, "Ladies and gentlemen, permit me to introduce to you a Congress of Rough Riders of the World!"

Long hair flowing to his shoulders, mustachios and

goatee, deep-set eyes and broad square brow made his head alone a striking trade-mark. Prancing at the head of the street parade, shooting glass balls, cracking the bull-whip, galloping on the turf or tan-bark, he was a picture of nonchalance and grace. Somebody said, "He rides as if he couldn't help it." Rosa Bonheur and Frederic Remington and many another artist delighted to paint him in the superb pose of centaur.

Millions who watched him perform and other millions who never saw him, read and indeed are still reading the tales of his exploits. Wild tales they were, but none too wild to be believed by a public eager for heroes.

When they gazed upon the man himself they saw that he looked the part of hero. His beauty, his skill as an exhibition marksman and the form and rhythm with which he rode his steed were decisive. Besides, he had a sense of humor and a strong vein of sentiment, which served well with the newspaper men. His personal charm was great; he was hail-fellow-well-met, an open-handed spender, a great mixer, ready to drink with all comers and swap yarns till break of day. He was unaffected in his fondness for children, and among the ladies he had a way with him.

Of those who worshiped him as the valorous champion that beat back the redskin and saved an inland empire, few realized that his active life on the plains ended when he was but twenty-six years old. The Indian wars were over; the plains had no future to offer him, and he was wondering whether he could get a job in the city as coachman or driver of a fire engine.

Then came Ned Buntline, the dime novelist, and, on his heels, John Burke, probably the greatest all-round press agent that ever lived, to persuade him, magnify him and make him their creature.

Certainly no individual, before the days of movies and radio, ever had such effective personal exploitation. For nearly half a century he was continuously held before the public, in the pages of nickel and dime novels, on the boards in blood and thunder melodrama and in that astounding Wild West Show which toured from the tank towns to the very thrones of Europe.

In private talk he would not permit himself or his friends to take seriously the cruder legends of his youth. Publicly he disclaimed many of them.

"I am a modest man and I can prove it," he said in one autobiography, the purpose of which was "to tell the real truth concerning my experiences rather than to have go into history, as veracious, much of the romantic and dramatic stuff that has been attributed to me by persons who have written of 'Buffalo Bill' and who depended upon hearsay, and more or less vivid imagination, for their extravagant consumption of good ink and paper."

The legends would not down. They were kept alive by nearly three hundred dime novels, by the artful zeal of press agents and by the devout memoirs written by other hands and sponsored by his wife and his sister. Many articles and books were signed with his own name. To his collaborators in these writings he gave a showman's license. They recite adventures of which he would never tell with his own lips, except in fun. When he grew old, however, he began to believe some of them himself and to say in all sincerity, "I stood between savagery and civilization most all my early days."

Truth about him has been hard to come by. Those who knew him in youth are dead or forgetful. The records are brittle, sparse and often fabulous. Fortunately, there is at the disposal of the authors of this volume a mass of "Buffalobilia" never before available

to any biographer. It includes scrap-books swollen with yellowed clippings and programs, stacks of letters in Cody's own scrawl, army orders and other official documents, photographs and relics, memoranda written by various men who were associated with Cody during his forty-four years as a showman, and financial statements that disclose how he made and lost his millions.

Burrowing in these collections and in the historical records, we learn, as might be guessed, that the flesh-and-blood Bill Cody was somewhat less in stature than the Buffalo Bill of the ink and the limelight. But we learn, too, that his life had hidden romances into which the professional romancers did not delve. Even if he had fought all the Indians that were credited to him, the youth on the plains could never have rivaled in courage and endurance the man that Bill Cody became as he fought debts and disaster and illness and injustice in his old age. Let none doubt that he was then a hero.

Many of the tales about him, which can neither be confirmed nor disproved, are embodied in the present chronicle to complete the record.

For the most part we are confident that this book tells the true story of Bill Cody, and that if he could read it he would not be forced to exclaim, as he did when he read the dime novels and the press agents' heroics, "Gosh! The things they write!"

CHAPTER II

PIONEER BLOOD

THE Cody family traced its ancestry back to Milesius, ancient king of Spain, whose sons became kings in Ireland. One of the line was king of Connaught, and Cody, like many another Irish name, was taken as a contraction of Connaught-Gallway.

A genealogy was displayed in the biography of Buffalo Bill which was sold from house to house and at the gates of the Wild West Show. It stated that the Codys emigrated from Ireland to the American colonies in 1747 and won fame in the Revolution. Its proudest boast was that "genuine royal blood courses in Colonel Cody's veins." The proof solemnly adduced was that the family had a crest on which there was a lion, just such a lion as that on the coat-of-arms of Spanish royalty.

When Mary Ann Leacock married Isaac Cody, a humble farmer, she little suspected his noble lineage. Very likely she would have appreciated in its stead a little more breeding in his hogs and considerably more cultivation of his corn. Being a good American mother, furthermore, she always believed that her son, William Frederick Cody, was to be president of the United States.

Household tradition held that a fortune-teller had put this idea in her head. When she was a girl, the story ran, she had visited in a southern city where she had crossed the palm of a popular soothsayer. She was told that on the steamboat going home she would meet the man she was to marry, and that she would bear him three sons, the second of whom would be famous throughout

the world and would rise to the presidency. The other items of the prophecy having come to pass, she often reminded the boy of his high destiny.

He was born in Scott County, Iowa, the fourth of eight children. In the family Bible the day of his birth is entered, in his own hand, as February 26, 1846.*

Helen, one of his five sisters, remembered his birth-place as "a pleasant, roomy farm-house, set in the sunlight against a background of cool, green wood and mottled meadow." He described it more romantically as a log cabin. This it may well have been, for Iowa was frontier.

Restless blood had driven the Cody forebears over the Alleghanies into Ohio. The same blood had driven Isaac across Indiana and Illinois. Crossing the Mississippi, he had settled on the west bank beyond the abrupt end of the railroad tracks out of the East.

In '49 those tracks began to bring bands of eager men with a magic word on their lips—gold! Watching wagon after wagon roll out toward California, Isaac Cody felt again the urge of the pioneer. He was not a success as a farmer. The sod of Iowa was heavy. On the Sacramento, so they said, you might stumble over nuggets and wash out glittering dust in a dishpan.

He talked to his neighbors and found some among them who would be argonauts too. A year after the rush had begun, they assembled an outfit and set forth. Hardly had they started when they began to meet a returning stream, the many who had been unequal to the thirst and the hunger, the cholera and the Indian attacks, and with these, others who had made the whole long journey and struck no pay dirt. Wisely, the Cody party turned back.

*On his tombstone the year is carved as 1845, his family as well as various biographers having been confounded by the juggling of dates indulged in by his press agents.

Isaac Cody now looked with a new disgust upon his dreary acres. "He abandoned the log cabin of my nativity," said the son, "and moved the family to a little village fifteen miles north of Davenport, on the Mississippi River, named LeClair. . . . He became a stage-driver on the line between Davenport and Chicago, but he had not followed this occupation long when he was chosen a justice of the peace and soon after was elected to the legislature, positions which reflected honor rather than material profit." This was incorrect.* It is true that Isaac was a popular man with a turn for politics and a ready tongue for oratory.

His son was left much to his own devices. Sent to school, the boy mastered his alphabet but, before he could learn to write, discovered the delight of playing hooky and pursued it daily. The mother had a fair education and according to her daughter was relied upon by the village to select the school-teacher. She did not know that the boy who should become president was spending his time skiff-riding on the river, filching melons and riding the horses that grazed on the common.

"I was quite as bad, though no worse, than the ordinary every-day boy who goes barefoot, wears a brimless hat, one suspender and a mischievous smile." This confession in his autobiography was well calculated to endear him to a juvenile clientele. Every anecdote of his boyhood, whoever might relate it, fitted nicely into the character that his public wanted him to be.

Earliest of all the adventures ascribed to him was that in which he killed his first man. Colonel Prentiss Ingraham, who became the most prolific author of Buffalo Bill novels, put it between paper covers, thus:

*The official register of Iowa shows that Isaac Cody was never a member of either house of the legislature.

When Billy was about eight years old he was so expert that his father let him carry a gun. One day he and another lad, caught in a storm, took refuge in a log cabin. This cabin was not merely abandoned, it was haunted. But Billy was not afraid. Soon the boys spied a gang of four men approaching. They instantly knew these men for horse-thieves. Through a trap-door the boys clambered into the loft. Lying there with bated breath they heard the bad men planning a raid. Worse yet, the raid was to be upon the Cody farm. Taking command, Billy dispatched the other boy out of the window and over the shed to summon help. He himself stood guard. All too soon the outlaws prepared to start, and—from this point Colonel Ingraham is worthy of direct quotation—

"Night was coming on to hide their red deeds.

"Hold on, boys, for I have got ye all covered. He's a dead man who moves."

"Billy had crept to the trap, and in his hoarsest tones, had spoken, while the men sprung to their feet. . . . One attempted to draw a weapon, but the boy's forefinger touched the trigger, and the outlaw fell dead at the flash, shot straight through the heart!"

Then the dauntless child of eight held the three remaining thieves at his mercy until a posse arrived and swung them all up on a tree.

First notch on his gun! A good story, crammed with every element needful for clandestine reading by pop-eyed youth sprawled in the haymow. Sad to say, it was one of the many that were too raw for Cody himself to swallow; he never adopted it.

He had one genuine adventure in Iowa. He saw his brother Samuel killed by an unruly mare. It left an im-

pression that was never effaced. All his years he spent among horses, rode them, drove them, raced them, exhibited them, and many a horse he loved ardently. But he never forgot the terror of the day when Betsy reared and hurled herself backward and down upon his brother.

That tragedy changed the whole course of his life. Had his older brother lived, he might never have attached himself to Wild Bill Hickok and made that bold scout his mentor. He might even have stayed in Iowa and grown up a farmer. For Samuel's death was so severe a shock to his mother that a change of scene was advised. The vagrant spirit of Isaac Cody leaped at the suggestion.

The new lure was Kansas. Political rumor said that the territory would soon be opened for settlement. It was still Indian ground, but the remorseless pressure of the white man was preparing once again to thrust the tribes out of their reserves and farther toward the west. Free and fertile land would be offered. There would be opportunity for a man of parts, and, meanwhile, one might thrive on trade with the Indians. Isaac's brother Elijah had a store in Weston, the bustling border town on the Missouri River. Elijah wrote that he was doing well, exporting hemp and selling supplies and maintaining a trading-post over in Kansas among the Pottawatomies.

Having been too late in starting for the gold-fields, Isaac Cody was forehanded this time. At least a year before the opening of Kansas he sold his Iowa property and emigrated. "Father had very extravagant ideas regarding vehicles and horses," says his daughter's narrative, "and such a passion for equestrian display that we often found ourselves with a stable full of thoroughbreds and an empty cupboard. For our Western migration we had, in addition to three prairie-schooners, a large family

carriage, drawn by a span of fine horses in silver-mounted harness. This carriage was made to order in the East, upholstered in the finest leather, polished and varnished as though for a royal progress. Mother and we girls found it more comfortable riding than the springless prairie-schooners."

For thirty days they rode through southern Iowa and Missouri. Twenty miles from the end of their journey occurred the only two experiences that made it memorable. When they stopped for the night at a farmhouse, the boy who had grown up on Iowa's staple, corn-dodger, had his first taste of bread made from wheat. There also he had his first sight of a negro.

The meeting with the black slave was a portent, for, two days later, the Codys reached the banks of the river where, at that very time, was brewing the storm that was to break into the tornado of civil war.

CHAPTER III

THE SHARP LOGIC OF THE BOWIE-KNIFE

LAW and morality never crossed the Missouri River. So it was said in the 'fifties.

At the great bend, above which the river flows from the north and is no longer a channel into the West, the tide of civilization had been turned. The natural water route floated all discreet emigrants up into the Northwest. Only the more adventurous had left the easy decks of the steamboats to plod the prairie afoot, in the saddle or behind the slow ox.

Geography texts mapped the area that stretched to the Rockies as a Sahara. General belief was that beyond the narrow fringe along the river all was sand and pebbles. To this waste that the white man did not covet, the government had exiled the eastern native tribes, pledging that they and their descendants might live there undisturbed for ever, and leaving their fate, as Lewis Cass said, "to the common God of the white man and the Indian."

Across this domain the Santa Fé trade had cut its trail into the Southwest. The Oregon pioneers, ranging farther north, had beaten the great road along the Platte, followed by the forty-niners and the Mormon hegira. The creeping trains had glimpsed the promise of the prairie. But they had left behind them only the ruts in the grass, ashes of burned wagons, a litter of goods cast off to lighten loads, and the whitening bones of cattle.

Of all the thousands who had crossed the river, few had stopped short of the mountains. When the Codys

came there were not more than eight hundred white men living in all of Kansas—a few squatters who had no legal right there, and missionaries and agents. There were the great Indian reserves and three army posts, hundreds of miles apart, the most important of which was Fort Leavenworth.

Just above Leavenworth, on the Missouri side, was Weston. There most of the up-river traffic stopped, caravans were outfitted for the overland passage, and ferries ran to the Kansas shore. Isaac Cody left his family in his brother's care and ferried across to prospect. The wagon he drove was laden with gaudy merchandise for barter with the Indians.

Within a few days he had chosen the spot on which to settle. Out of Leavenworth he followed the well-marked Salt Lake Trail. Three miles beyond the fort he passed a trading-post already in full swing, owned by one Rively, a Missourian. Pressing on a few miles more, he mounted a hill and came down into the Salt Creek Valley, not far from the Kickapoo reserve. Here he pulled his wagon off the road and began his brief career as a trader. And here he soon brought his seven-year-old son to help in the lighter tasks while he felled trees and built a cabin.

Never was a boy destined for fame turned loose at a more strategic point. He was not yet on the prairie, but at its margin, in a valley bounded by forest and hills with gently sloping fields. In the woods were wild animals to be shot and trapped. Only a little to the west roamed mighty herds of that strange shaggy beast, the buffalo. Only a little to the east lay the fort, with its glitter of cannon and clatter of cavalry.

Before the very door of the cabin marched the pageant of a quickening nation. Prairie-schooners with eager

young faces peering out beneath the canvas; bull-trains creaking with mysterious freight; the bright red and green stage-coaches, each drawn by six mules and guarded by eight men so heavily armed that they could fire one hundred and thirty-six shots without stopping; belated gold-seekers, scouts and guides, trappers and hunters and soldiers, filled the child's vision daily with new wonders and strange delights.

And all about were Indians. They were not the sort he had known in Iowa, lazy dirty half-breeds left behind when their villages moved, already touched by the blight of an alien civilization. These were full-blooded, self-reliant, good neighbors. Their good-will testified that they did not yet mistrust the treaties of removal that George Manypenny was arguing with their chiefs.

Billy Cody played with the Indian boys, learned their sports and the use of the bow and arrow, and picked up words in the Kickapoo tongue. His father, in one of his first trades, got him an Indian pony and told him to break it himself. "I named him Prince. I had a couple of hard falls, but I made up my mind I was going to ride that pony or bust, and—I did not bust."

The very next day, by one of those coincidences which sparkle in the annals of notable men, the boy fell in with the youth who taught him the horsemanship that became his chief accomplishment. A party of trappers came into the valley and made camp. Watching them cook their venison and make bread by holding over the fire a stick wrapped in dough, the boy struck up a friendship with one and took him to his father. The young man let it fall that he was returning to Weston to see an uncle, Elijah Cody; whereupon Isaac exclaimed, in the traditional manner, "If Elijah Cody is your uncle, I am too! You must be the long lost Horace Billings."

Horace, who had run away and traveled far, was a skilful rider. Under his instruction young Billy broke his pony and learned to throw the lariat. The army post at Leavenworth had lost many horses in a stampede and was offering a bounty. Horace Billings captured twenty-five, while his adoring cousin galloped by his side.

In some accounts the seven-year-old boy himself is credited with roping the horses. When at the age of nineteen he was courting the girl he meant to marry, he told her, according to her recollection, "My mother always objected. But she never said no to me. The night I went away on my first hunt she cried, but she did not let me know it. We were very poor and the government was paying ten dollars a head for every horse that was recovered."

The sturdy, good-looking youngster, sitting his pony like an old-timer and not in the least bashful, found a welcome among the teamsters and bull-whackers who had time to kill in their camps near the fort. From them he began to absorb the lore of horses, mules and cattle. He made the acquaintance of William H. Russell, a personage in those parts, for the firm of Russell, Majors and Waddell was coming to be a power in the overland freighting. A kindly soul, Russell sometimes let the boy ride beside him as he went about the noisy business of assembling and dispatching his bull-trains.

Soon there was an excursion which gave the boy his first taste of the prairie. Elijah took the family and some friends from Weston to his trading-post on the Kansas River. Leaving the dark green of the forest and the trees, they rode out on the open expanse, which a contemporary writer described as Billy first saw it: "The land rises and falls in gentle swells, which attain an elevation of thirty feet, more or less, and descend again to the orig-

inal level, within the distance of one or more miles. The crest-lines of these motionless waves of land intersect each other at every conceivable angle. . . . In their spring covering of vegetation these prairies wear the semblance of an old and once highly cultivated country, from the soil of which every inequality of surface, every stone, and every bush has been carefully removed and the surface rolled down into absolute uniformity. The marvel is suggested how Nature could have kept these verdant fields in such luxuriance after man had apparently abandoned them to waste."

Elijah arranged a barbecue for the entertainment of his customers, the Pottawatomies. They, to return the courtesy, performed one of their barbaric dances. In the quarter-century to come, the boy who watched the antics of the friendly braves was to be glorified as the Indian's fiercest foe. For a few years yet, however, the excitements and hardships of his life were to arise not in strife with the red man but in the struggle for justice to the black.

Settlement of Kansas was not forced by an urgent need for new growth. It was a stratagem in the contest between North and South. Under the Missouri Compromise the Indian country had been sliced along a straight line into two sections, one to be slave, one to be free. Stephen A. Douglas was badgering Congress to repeal the compromise and set up two new territories, Kansas and Nebraska, in which the residents themselves should determine whether they should have slave labor. A few thousand voters, it appeared, might settle the fate of slavery over the wide area between river and mountains.

Fearful of the issue if it were left to "squatter sovereignty," the Abolitionists prepared to send in colonists who would vote for a free state. In Missouri, the most

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EUGENE BOGARDUS,

Columbia's Coming Man.

EDWARD BOGARDUS,

HENRY BOGARDUS,

FRANK BOGARDUS.

A portion of the program of the Wild West Show of 1884

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A NEW FIELD! WITHOUT A RIVAL! JUST THE THING! TRUTHS STRANGER THAN FICTION!

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Adventures OF **BUFFALO BILL** FROM BOYHOOD TO MANHOOD.
 Deeds of Daring and Romantic Incidents in the Life of
 Wm. F. Cody, the Monarch of Bordermen.

BY COLONEL PRENTISS INGRAHAM.



MADDENED WITH FURY, THE BULL BOUNDED INTO THE AIR, SPROUTED WILDLY, GORED THOSE IN ADVANCE, AND SOON LED THE HINDS.

From the collection of Dr. Frank P. O'Brien

Cover of a Buffalo Bill novel

northerly slave state, "Blue Lodges," "Social Bands" and other groups were secretly forming, resolved to preserve the economic bulwark of the South. Hundreds of their numbers sallied across the river to preempt claims, blazing trees and laying out logs as if for the foundations of cabins.

Of the many squatters already there, Isaac Cody, with Iowa and Ohio behind him, was one of the few who held with abolition. But the Missouri bank at every crossing was alight with the camp-fires of families from east and north, waiting only for the passage of the law to hurry over and stake genuine claims.

The Codys had seen the emigrants thronging at Weston. They had seen there, also, the stuff of which border ruffians were made. Hardy vagabonds come up the river on the steamboat, ex-soldiers discharged from Fort Leavenworth since the war with Mexico, scapegraces who had started for the gold-fields or the fur country or the Santa Fé route and had stranded on the shore of the Big Muddy, herders, teamsters, traders, gamblers, outlaws, reckless spirits of every sort overran the place, drank its "double-rectified, copper-distilled, trigger-lightning sod-corn juice" and fought merrily in its streets. An old resident of those days, stung by a slur upon the character of his home town, wrote to a newspaper: "The better class of people in Weston were not given to fist fights, but generally used knives or pistols." This better element found use for its turbulent floating population when the border warfare began.

The treaties with the Indians were quietly negotiated, making most of the land within two hundred miles of the Missouri available for settlement. The word of the white man was broken with due formality. On May 30, 1854, the Kansas-Nebraska Act was signed. Douglas

exulted that the slavery question was "forever banished from the halls of Congress to the Western plains."

Even before the land offices were open for business, hundreds of the waiting colonists poured into Kansas. "The country is swarming with emigrants," said a new-fledged newspaper. "Men on horseback with cup and skillet, ham, flour and coffee tied behind them, and axe on shoulder, are hurrying westward, companies with flags flying are staking out the prairie, trees are falling, tents are stretching, cabins are going up and everybody is alive and wide awake. Hurrah for Kansas! Westward the star of empire takes its way."

Within a fortnight Leavenworth was organized as a town. Isaac Cody lost no time in registering a claim for his plot of one hundred and sixty acres in Salt Creek Valley. On July seventeenth the first party recruited by the Emigrant Aid Society left Boston, backed by New England money and armed with New England rifles. John G. Whittier celebrated them in song:

*"We cross the prairie as of old
The pilgrims crossed the sea,
To make the West, as they the East,
The homestead of the free!"*

Slave-owners were not so foot-loose as these Yankees were. They could ill afford to move in if at the coming elections their slaves were going to be expelled. Vigilance committees formed to protect those who were "sound on the goose," against the depredations of the "thieves and paupers from the sinks of abolitionism." More direct methods were favored by others. Wherever a free-soil colony was projected, there was a swift invasion of Missouri men in red flannel shirts, with guns in their belts

and bowie-knives in the tops of their boots. They staked claims by planting neck-down the whisky bottles which they drained as they came, and went home without bothering to put up buildings. The intent of the border ruffian was to live on the Missouri side but to vote and fight in Kansas, employing, as Edward Everett said, "the sharp logic of the revolver and the bowie-knife."

By September, however, there were eight thousand people living in the territory. A visitor described the new town of Leavenworth:

"There was one steam-engine, naked as when it was born, but at work, sawing out its clothes. There were four tents, all on one street, a barrel of water or whisky under a tree, and a pot on a pole over a fire. Under a tree, a typesetter had his case before him, and was at work on the first number of the new paper; and within a frame, without board on side or roof, was the editor's desk and sanctum. When we returned from the territory to Weston, we saw the notice stating that the editor had removed his office from under the elm tree to the corner of 'Broadway and the Levee.' This Broadway was, at that time, much broader than the streets of old Babylon, for, with the exception of the Fort, there was, probably, not a house on either side for thirty miles."

This enterprising editor wrote, in his first number: "Ourselves and our compositors have been, like the patriarchs of old, dwellers in tents for two weeks past. We have packed wood, built fires, cooked, fought mosquitoes, slept on prairie hay on the ground and superintended the erection of a building for an office."

By February he was able to boast, "Leavenworth now has a hotel, a saw mill, a tailor's shop, a shoe-maker, a barber, two blacksmiths, three carpenter shops, several law and two doctors' offices."

THE MAKING OF BUFFALO BILL

The industrious permanent inhabitants of the new territory, it soon appeared, were not to be allowed to conduct their own government. At the first election, in the autumn, several thousand Missourians rode in, stuffed the ballot-boxes and piled up a pro-slavery plurality.

To fraud were added intimidation and force at the second election, in March. The army of Missourians who came to the polls in Lawrence were armed not only with rifles and knives, but with two cannon loaded with musket-balls. That day the Reverend Frederick Starr was shocked by the sight of a wagon-load of "piratical ruffians" returning into Missouri. He described their rig, perhaps with some aid from a vivid Yankee imagination: a five-foot pole stuck upright in the wagon, on its top an empty whisky bottle, a revolver and a bowie-knife lashed across, a powder-horn hanging, a flag of black cambric with death's head and bones painted in white, and a long streamer of glossy Missouri hemp floating out suggestively.

Though there were less than three thousand qualified voters, six thousand ballots were cast that day. A legislature was elected which made it felony to speak a word against slavery. "Come on, Southern men," cried the Leavenworth paper, "bring your slaves and fill up the territory!" They came, not to bring their slaves, but to make the territory "bleeding Kansas."

In later years Buffalo Bill would declare, "My father was the first man to shed blood in the fight against the extension of slavery." For many months Isaac Cody avoided the issue. Almost all of the settlers in Salt Creek were pro-slavery. Elijah, as a merchant of Weston, had done as local merchants are prone to do and had taken his opinion from that of his customers. The neighbors

assumed that Isaac agreed with his brother. He kept his abolitionist sentiments to himself.

One day he and Billy were returning from the fort where they had delivered a load of hay. At Rively's trading-post, they saw a crowd gathered. Speeches were being made. They stopped to listen. Some drunken Missourians, recognizing Isaac, clamored for a speech from him. His itch for oratory was his undoing. He mounted a dry-goods box.

Either he mistook the temper of the meeting and thought that a real debate was in order, or else he wished to startle it by defiance. The versions of his remarks differ, according to the literary style of the narrator. We select an extract from his daughter's book as the more polished: "*I am, and always have been, opposed to slavery. It is an institution that not only degrades the slave, but brutalizes the slave-holder, and I pledge you my word that I shall use my best endeavors—yes, I shall lay down my life, if need be—to keep this curse from finding lodgment upon Kansas soil. It is enough that the fairest portions of our land are already infected with this blight. May it spread no farther.*"

Hoots and hisses answered him, and cries of, "Get down off that box!" Stubbornly he went on. Charles Dunn, an employee of Elijah, was angered by the renegade. He leaped to the box and plunged a bowie-knife into Isaac's back. Little Billy, standing by, caught him as he fell. Some of the gang, sobered now, held the ruffian back and helped the boy to take his father home. The path along which they took him, Helen said, "was afterward referred to in the early history of Kansas as the 'Cody Bloody Trail.' "*

*One Buffalo Bill autobiography dates this affair in June, 1854, another in June, 1856. Helen placed it in June, 1855, which is almost certainly

THE MAKING OF BUFFALO BILL

In time the press agents succeeded in making Buffalo Bill enlarge the claim and say, "My father was the first man to *lose his life* in the cause of the freedom of the negro race." This was clearly inaccurate. Isaac Cody lived two years more, and during those two years many a man lost his life in the border warfare. Isaac's family insisted that the knife pierced his lung and that he never wholly recovered from the wound, which was therefore the real cause of his death.

While he survived, however, he was constantly active. By various accounts his son Billy was almost as constantly active in saving his life.

Hardly had the wounded man returned to his work, when a band of armed horsemen came by night to surround the cabin. Isaac put on his wife's clothes and walked right through their ranks. He hid himself in the thicket formed by the sod corn. There he lay for three days. "My first real work as a scout began then," Buffalo Bill recalled, "for I had to keep constantly on the watch for raids by ruffians, who had now sworn that father must die."

Escaping at last, Isaac fled to Leavenworth and took a boat up the river, joining Colonel Jim Lane's little free-state army which was moving against Lawrence. He was in one fight with Lane, and came home to take to

correct, if the assault occurred at all, for the period of violence in the border warfare began on April thirtieth of that year, when Malcolm Clarke was killed by a free-state man. On May 17, 1855, William Phillips of Leavenworth, who had protested against the election, had been seized by fourteen Missourians, tarred, feathered, ridden on a rail and auctioned off by a negro for the sum of one dollar. Of this lynching the *Leavenworth Herald* had said, "The joy, exultation and glorification produced by it in our community are unparalleled."

While Isaac Cody may have been the first actually to shed blood for the cause, Phillips was by several weeks the first to be assaulted.

his sick-bed again. While he lay there one Sharpe came to the cabin, very drunk, and ordered Mrs. Cody to cook him some supper. As he sat at the table, he amused himself by whetting his bowie-knife on his shoe, and announcing that he was going to search the house and cut the heart out of Isaac Cody. Billy took down his rifle, cocked it and sat scowling on the stairs that led to his father's room. The drunkard finally ate his dinner and went away. "It was a fortunate thing for him that he did," said Buffalo Bill.

Another time Sharpe came at the head of a party and shouted to Mrs. Cody through the door, "We want that old abolition husband of yours and, dead or alive, we mean to have him." She shouted back that the house was full of armed men and that she would give them two minutes to get out of the yard. Billy and his sisters and a visiting friend began stamping on the floor to imitate the tread of a squad of soldiers marching forward in formation (even in the narrow length of a cabin!). The cowardly attackers retired in haste. They had intended to blow the Codys into eternity, for the next morning two kegs of powder and a fuse were found in the open cellar.

Such is the fictional flavor that clings about all the episodes of this period. Dates conflict and accounts are contradictory. Buffalo Bill himself said, "I cannot now recall one-half of the serious difficulties that we had to encounter."

Since he could no longer live at home in safety, Isaac left his family and went farther west to Grasshopper Falls, where lots were being drawn for a free-state colony. There he put up a saw-mill.

Learning that a gang was setting out again to go to kill his father, little Billy mounted his pony and rode to warn him. About seven miles from home he passed the

gang, camped at a creek. They recognized him and ordered him to halt. Instead he urged his pony to the gallop, and, although chased for several miles, escaped and got through with the warning.

So ran his own version. As perfected for publicity purposes by other writers the tale became more thrilling. To go to the rescue Billy rose from a bed of fever. Almost too weak to stand, he held out a handkerchief. "*Tie it tight around my head, mother,*" said he, "*then it won't ache so hard.*" He rode in the face of a threatening storm. When the assassins called to him to halt, his reply was to drive the spurs into Prince and dart ahead, followed by a rain of bullets. The storm broke and the road became the bed of a muddy stream. He was drenched to the skin. Chills and weakness came over him again. He set his teeth and pressed on to accomplish his heroic purpose. "*At last! A welcome light gleamed between the crystal bars of rain. . . . His ride had been longer by ten miles than that famous gallop of the friend of his later years—Phil Sheridan.*"

His father now went to Lawrence and became a member of the free-soil legislature organized as a protest against the "bogus legislature" which had been elected with the votes of the border ruffians.*

*This is the only established fact about the Codys in the early days. Records show Isaac Cody's name on the roster of the assembly at Topeka on March 4, 1856. Everything else that we have about him rests upon the writings of his children, the press agents and the novelists. The stabbing at Rively's does not appear in the long list of such deeds recorded in the *Annals of Kansas*.

William E. Connelley, Secretary of the Kansas Historical Society, after considerable investigation, in the course of which he interviewed many of the pioneers, stated that Isaac Cody "moved about from place to place here in Kansas and had no influence on the free-state cause, took no part in it, was not stabbed as has been stated and was never mistreated in any way by border ruffians."

The persecution went on. The old enemy, Sharpe, came to search the cabin again. This time he took away with him the pony, Prince. Cody's comment on that, made more than twenty years later, has the clear ring of truth: "I shall never forget the man who stole that pony. He afterwards rose from the low level of a horse thief to the high dignity of a justice of the peace, and I think still lives at Kickapoo. The loss of my faithful pony nearly broke my heart and bankrupted me in business, as I had nothing to ride."

His father being away, the boy took his sorrow to his friend, William Russell. "Cheer up," said Russell. "I'll give you twenty-five dollars a month to herd cattle." The money was tempting, but perhaps more tempting was the offer of a little gray mule to ride. So at ten years old Billy ran away from home without telling his mother. At the end of two months he was back again with silver money in a sack tied on his mule.

His first job was soon followed by his first love-affair and his first scrape. A school having been started in the valley, Mrs. Cody induced her son to give book-learning another trial. He promptly fell in love with Mary Hyatt. There was a rival—Stephen Gobel. Steve was three years older and, one must hasten to add, the school bully. The Cody dog scored a victory over the Gobel dog. Steve pushed over the arbors that Billy built for his sweetheart. They fought, and Steve being the bigger was the winner. The teacher thrashed them both. The next morning they fought again. Billy was downed again. But this time he happened to be toting a knife. His sister asserted that he drew the knife deliberately and thrust the point into Steve's leg, coolly choosing a spot where the cut would not be mortal. Cody himself said that the knife fell out of his pocket, his hand touched

it and in his anger he forgot himself and stuck it into his antagonist.

In any case, blood flowed. Steve shouted that he was being killed. The teacher came running, brandishing a club. Billy fled. Fleeing, he saw in the road a bull-train bound west for Fort Kearney. The wagon master was a friend and hid him in a wagon. Before night the boy was off for his first journey on the overland trail.

Forty days with a bull outfit was fun, even though there were no exciting events, no Indian raids and no encounters with wild animals along the well-traveled road that led to Fort Kearney, the nearest post. There were twenty-five great wagons, each drawn by several yoke of oxen and carrying seven thousand pounds of freight under its canvas sheets; thirty-one men, heavily armed, most of them good-natured and glad to spin yarns for an appreciative lad. Gathering wood and fetching water, cooking in the open at a smoking fire, sleeping under the wagons, chasing loose cattle, coming at last to the isolated little fort, and jogging back over the same rolling road to Leavenworth, Billy Cody must have rejoiced that he had not been caged on an Iowa farm. Life on the plains suited him.

There was no more school for him that term. In his absence the teacher had protested that he was not hired to teach desperadoes. "But," the sister wrote, "Will had already dismissed himself, and had rejoined the larger school whose walls are the blue bowl called the sky."

War threatened. Lawrence had been sacked by eight hundred southern marauders. "Hirelings picked from the drunken spew and vomit of civilization," thundered Charles Summer. Old John Brown and his sons had ridden to Dutch Henry's crossing where they dragged out and slaughtered five pro-slavery men.



Terrors of a Stampede.

The Cow Boys.

Among the many features of "the wild West," not the least attractive will be the advent in the East of a band of veritable "cow-boys," a class without whose aid the great grazing Pampas of the West would be valueless, and the Eastern necessities of the table, the tan-yard, and the factory would be meagre. These will be the genuine cattle herders of a reputable trade, and not the later misnomers of "the road," who, in assuming an honored title, have tarnished it in the East, while being in fact the cow-boys' greatest foe, the thieving, criminal "rustler." To *Wilkes' Spirit*, of March, the editor is indebted for a just tribute and description of the

A typical illustration from an early Wild West Show program



"The youngest Indian slayer on the plains." Billy Cody at the age of twelve

Buffalo Bill's publicity asserted at various times that his father was an intimate of John Brown and Jim Lane and Governor Reeder, and that even Abraham Lincoln came to visit his father at Salt Creek. But Isaac Cody's service, if any, during the border warfare was recruiting. He went east and used his oratory in getting colonists to come out to Grasshopper Falls and other free state settlements. In the spring of 1857 he came home from Ohio with a heavy cold in his lungs. In April he died. "The wound inflicted by Dunn had at last fulfilled the murderer's purpose," said his son.

The mother was ill with consumption; there was a new baby; the Cody estate was sued for a thousand-dollar debt. The family was in desperate straits. The time had come for the boy of the house to go to work in earnest.

CHAPTER IV

YOUNGEST INDIAN SLAYER ON THE PLAINS

IN THOSE boom days of the overland freighting out of Leavenworth, the obvious job for a sturdy local youngster was with Russell, Majors and Waddell. That energetic firm was building up toward its peak of six thousand wagons, seventy thousand oxen and eight thousand men and boys.

Long afterward, at a celebration in honor of Buffalo Bill, white-bearded old Alexander Majors rose and said:

"Forty-three years ago this day, this fine-looking physical specimen of manhood was brought to me by his mother—a little boy nine years old, and little did I think at that time that the boy that was standing before me, asking for employment of some kind by which I could afford to pay his mother a little money for his services, was going to be a boy of such destiny as he has turned out to be.* He, gentlemen, stands before you now, known the wide world over as the last of the great scouts. When the boy Cody came to me, standing straight as an arrow, and looked me in the face, I said to my partner, Mr. Russell, who was standing by my side, 'We will take this little boy, and we will pay him a man's wages, because he can ride a pony just as well as any man can.' "

Russell being willing, the boy took the famous "oath" of the wagoners. Wild West literature preserves many curious forms of this pledge, which was a vestige of Majors' Christian upbringing back in Kentucky. In his

*He was really eleven; Majors confused the incident with the earlier occasion when Billy came to work as a herder.

own book Majors said that it was simply a set of rules which each employee had to sign, agreeing "not to use profane language, not to get drunk, not to gamble, not to treat animals cruelly, and not to do anything else that is incompatible with the conduct of a gentleman." Cody described it as a lengthy oath beginning, "I do hereby solemnly swear, before the Great and Living God——" He took huge delight in telling how Uncle Aleck would present a Testament to each man as he swore and signed, and in saying that the ceremony forced upon that gang of bordermen did about as much good as if the riot act were read to a herd of stampeding buffalo. But he would add, "I did my best to live up to its provisions."

These provisions were a comfort to Mrs. Cody, for they made her feel that her son was in good company. Her one fear was of the Indians. On the roster as boy messenger, Billy was attached to an outfit led by Frank and Bill McCarthy, bound for Utah with a drove of beef cattle. As he prepared to go, his family crowded about and admonished him to run if he saw any Indians.*

Later legends picture life in the West as one long reign of terror, with Indians constantly hovering about and swooping down in sudden assault. This conception was based upon the intermittent warfare that began in 1862. It was kept vivid by the propaganda of bordermen and army officers. Through every means of civilized communication, press, mail, telegraph and public exhibition, they strengthened the public belief in Indian brutality and treachery. Their gospel was Sheridan's, "the only good Indian is a dead Indian."

*There are some hints that Cody's job was not to cross the plains, but to remain near Leavenworth as a messenger, riding out a few miles to meet incoming wagon-trains or to overtake the outgoing trains soon after their departure, fetching and carrying the train-book with orders and bills of lading. Majors once said that Cody was "the office boy on horseback."

The Indian had no medium of publicity through which to reply. As Frederic L. Paxson says, "The scalped and mutilated pioneer with his haystacks burning and his stock run off, is a vivid picture in the period, but is less characteristic than the long-suffering Indian, accepting the inevitable and moving to let the white man in."

After the Civil War it was easy to gain credence for any invention about Indian attacks, and to date it as far back as the purposes of the narrator might dictate. In 1857, however, the period of depredations had not opened. The tribes had not yet wholly lost their faith in the invader, in spite of his broken treaties. Besides, they remembered well the lesson of 1855, when General Harney had shot down a hundred of Little Thunder's band of Brulé Sioux on the Bluewater. Amity ruled over most of the plains, and the eastern reaches of the overland trail were supposed to be as undisturbed as any highway. Yet Billy Cody, we are told, got only thirty-five miles beyond Fort Kearney before he faced his first Indian fight.

The train of three wagons and many steers reached Plum Creek. They made camp for dinner, near the banks of the Platte River. With no suspicion that Indians were near, most of the men went to sleep under the wagons. Only three herders were left on guard. A band of Indians came down with a yell, shot the three herders, killing them instantly, and stampeded the cattle. The rest of the party woke up and fired a volley which checked the attack. Their animals gone, they made a break for the slough.

Using the bank of the river as a breastwork, they made a running fight, wading in the shallow water back toward Fort Kearney. The story attributed to Cody himself in *The Great Salt Lake Trail*, the most serious

YOUNGEST INDIAN SLAYER ON THE PLAINS

volume that bore his name, is as follows: "The Indians followed us pretty close, and were continually watching for an opportunity to get a good range and give us a raking fire. Covering ourselves by keeping well under the bank, we pushed ahead as rapidly as possible, and made pretty good progress, the night finding us still on the way and our enemies yet on our track.

"I, being the youngest and smallest of the party, became somewhat tired, and without noticing it I had fallen behind the others for some little distance. It was about ten o'clock and we were keeping very quiet and hugging close to the bank, when I happened to look up at the moonlight sky and saw the plumed head of an Indian peeping over the bank. Instead of hurrying ahead and alarming the men in a quiet way, I instantly aimed my gun at his head and fired. The report rang out sharp and loud on the night air, and was immediately followed by an Indian whoop; the next moment about six feet of dead Indian came tumbling into the river. I was not only overcome with astonishment, but was badly scared, as I could hardly realize what I had done. I expected to see the whole force of Indians come down upon us. While I was standing thus bewildered, the men who had heard the shot and the war-whoop and had seen the Indian take a tumble, came rushing back.

" 'Who fired that shot?' cried Frank McCarthy.

" 'I did,' replied I, rather proudly, as my confidence returned and I saw the men coming up.

" 'Yes, and little Billy has killed an Indian stone-dead—too dead to skin,' said one of the men, who had approached nearer than the rest, and had almost stumbled over the corpse."

Upon this feat the whole structure of Buffalo Bill's prestige as an Indian killer was reared. Curiously, it

was touched with deprecation by that fervid dime novelist, Prentiss Ingraham. In the Ingraham version the Indian was peering over the bank to reconnoiter, when he lost his balance or the earth gave way, and Billy shot him as he slid down. McCarthy skilfully took the scalp and handed the gory trophy to the boy, who shuddered as he took it and said modestly, "If the bank hadn't caved in, that Injun would have had me."

Sometimes in reminiscence over a glass Cody would say that he killed his first Indian "quite accidentally." In other moods he would boast, "I knew well enough that in another second he would drop one of my friends, so I raised my Yager and fired." Again he would chuckle, "That Indian has been hitched to my name like a tin kettle to a dog's tail," and once in 1914, when the Kansas historian, William E. Connelley, tried to question him about the affair, he changed the subject, leaving the strong suspicion that it was purely fiction.

At dawn, the story went on, the weary fugitives reached Fort Kearney, and went back with a detachment of cavalry in vain pursuit of the hostiles. Having lost their herd, they were sent back to Leavenworth. There the boy was interviewed by a newspaper reporter. The next morning he was in the head-lines, and in a long sensational story, as the "youngest Indian slayer on the plains."

It is a pity that neither newspaper file nor clipping is extant to record this first break into print. The story, Cody said, appeared in the *Leavenworth Times* in July, 1857; but that paper was not founded until the following February.* Diligent as press agents became in reconstructing the background for Buffalo Bill and supporting

*The *Kansas Herald* was then being issued at Leavenworth, but the bound volumes were destroyed in a fire.

YOUNGEST INDIAN SLAYER ON THE PLAINS

it with testimonials and references, they never brought to light this essential voucher. Nor has any historical record of the affray been found. While the killing of a mere Indian was no matter for historical record, the three white herders whose bodies had been "scalped and literally cut to pieces" should have deserved some mention in the thorough *Annals of Kansas*. But that volume does not list this or any other Indian outrage in the year 1857. We are forced to rely upon the authority of Cody himself for the details of the encounter and of the resultant newspaper publicity.

"My exploit was related in a very graphic manner," he said. "For a long time afterward I was considerable of a hero." How he accepted the privileges and responsibilities of a hero appears in the book signed by his sister Helen. The family was forced to meet the charge that Isaac Cody had left a thousand-dollar debt unpaid. Uncle Elijah turned a deaf ear, but in the court-room, "with his head held high, was the family protector, our brave young brother." The neighbors crowded to the trail to stare at the notorious Indian slayer. When the Codys won the case, cheer upon cheer arose.

Worshiped by his sisters and by baby Charlie, the boy was by turns a fascinating tease and an ingenious leader of play. He scalped their dolls. He made them shiver with his stories of Indian torture. At experience meetings on "preacher day," he made them giggle by pronouncing fervent "amens" in a disguised voice. He organized and costumed them as Indians, bull-whackers and soldiers and took them into the woods to act out his late adventures. He was so tall that the rooster feathers he wore in his hair were beyond their reach, while their scalps never escaped him.

One day, Helen said, he suddenly stopped the drama

to exclaim, " 'I believe I'll run a show when I get to be a man.' "

" 'That fortune lady said you'd got to be President of the United States,' said Eliza."

Will was scornful. How could a fortune-teller know what he was going to be? " 'I'll tell you right now, girls, I don't propose to be President, but I do mean to have a show! ' "

He did not always insist upon his renunciation of high office. That summer he was drunk for the first time. He and a neighbor's son tapped a barrel of hard cider. The neighbor brought Billy home in a wagon, singing and shouting against reproof: " 'Don't talk to me. You forget that I am to be President of the United States.' " And, his sister added piously, "Will never touched cider again."

In his rôle as man of the house, the boy objected to the good-for-nothing who wooed and married his older sister, Martha. He "absented himself" from the wedding, Helen said, and when Martha died after a year of unhappiness, he stood over her coffin and cried to the faithless husband, "*Murderer, one day you shall answer to me for the death of her who lies there!*"

In the artistic confusion to which the novelists were susceptible, this incident seems to have formed the basis for a story of a boy's revenge. There was a girl of eighteen, said Prentiss Ingraham, with whom the eleven-year old Billy was deeply in love. He learned that a married man was basely plotting to marry her. To avert bigamy Billy promptly went and killed the scoundrel.

In actual fact, Cody did no killing of this sort at any time in his life, either in private feud or public duty. He never carried out the threat against Martha's hus-

YOUNGEST INDIAN SLAYER ON THE PLAINS

band, and if his own story is true the reason for his absence from her wedding was that he was off on another long journey.

His second expedition, like the first, seems to have been disastrous and crucial. He fell into the clutches of the Mormons, an enemy who, in subsequent publicity, cut as dire a figure as border ruffians or Indians. For the horror of Mountain Meadow, where John D. Lee and his Mormon militia slaughtered a hundred and twenty Gentile emigrants, did not fade from the public mind for twenty years. Since none but seventeen little children were spared in that massacre, it could not be fitted into the epic of Buffalo Bill. But at about the same time he encountered one of the other bands of Mormons who were roving the mountains to waylay supply trains.

Utah was in rebellion.

Driven out of Nauvoo in Illinois, the Latter-Day Saints had found their Zion on the shores of the Great Salt Lake. Traveling elders had scoured Europe for able-bodied converts. For ten years the prairie-schooners supplied by the church picked up the proselytes at the Missouri River and hauled them out into the desert, there to dig and plant and irrigate until they created a rich green oasis. In 1855 came crop failure. There being no money to buy more horses and wagons, Brigham Young gave orders to "let the emigrant foot it."

In the saga of the overland trail there is no more cruel chapter than the trek of 1856, when thirteen hundred wretched Scandinavians and Britons footed it all the thousand miles from the river to Salt Lake, dragging their goods in two-wheeled hand-carts. A traveler wrote in that year: "We met two trains, one of thirty and the other of fifty carts, averaging about six to the

cart. The carts were generally drawn by one man and three women each, though some carts were drawn by women alone. . . . The road was lined for a mile behind the train with the lame, halt, sick and needy."

Shocked first by polygamy and then by the ruthlessness of the prophets, the administration at Washington was aroused to action by the discovery that the Mormons intended to run their territory to suit themselves. When Young, the dictator, defied federal authority, President Buchanan sent out new officials. They were supported by an army of fifteen hundred men under the command of Colonel Albert Sidney Johnston.

A ten-wagon bull-train carrying food and supplies for the troops took Billy Cody to Utah. There were genuine hazards this time. He would be gone for many months, and the wagon-boss, Lew Simpson, although one of the best, was a desperate character. They said he had killed at least one man every time he had crossed the plains.

Once more Mrs. Cody protested; her son's recent narrow escape should be a warning to him. "I returned the answer that I had determined to follow the plains as an occupation." Mr. Russell added his assurance that Simpson had taken a fancy to the boy and could be trusted to give him good care. His wages as cavallard driver, tending the loose cattle, would be forty dollars a month, gold. And Billy, it must be remembered, had already proved that he could look out for himself.

So the young Indian slayer put a leg over a mule, fell in alongside the J. Murphy wagons, and rode out toward the Rockies.

CHAPTER V

HERO-WORSHIP

LEW SIMPSON's outfit was a tough one. When they camped, the boy cavallard driver would sit agog by the hour while the bull-whackers reeled off their reminiscences and roared over their practical jokes. A day came when they turned their crude humor on him. Several of the teamsters started to manhandle him. He was in torment until, as the story goes, a blond giant appeared from beneath a wagon and drawled softly, "Let that boy alone."

They let him alone. Wild Bill Hickok, even at twenty, was called a bad man to fool with. The grateful boy stared up into cool gray eyes and found his hero.*

Jim Hickok was the younger brother of a wagon-master who bore the complimentary nickname of Wild Bill, which he later acquired in his own right. He was good to look at, except across the muzzle of a gun. Six feet two in moccasins, he had broad shoulders, narrow loins and slender hands that he was always pulling and bending back and forward like a bird's wings, in order to keep them supple for gun-play and, some said, for card-play. His auburn hair, sun-brightened, was fourteen inches long where the ringlets touched his shoulders, and his tawny mustache grew until the two ends could meet at the back of his head. A dandy in dress when in town, as mild of manner as a Quaker, he had the stride

*This is legendary. Wild Bill was not in that part of the country until 1860 and therefore could not have become Billy Cody's hero during the trek of 1857.

of a tiger and a trick of firing with both guns on the up-go which crowded cemeteries with the bodies of men who had intended to shoot on the drop.

Romantic as was the long friendship between Wild Bill and the youthful Cody, it was made even more romantic by the fictions woven about it. The assertion that the two scouts were cousins was false. And unhappily, this rescue of the boy from Simpson's teamsters, as so often recited, was equally false.*

There were, however, other significant meetings on that long journey. When they came to Plum Creek, Billy pointed out the spot where the Indians had come down on McCarthy's camp. Searching about, they could not find the single grave in which soldiers had buried the three herders. The prairie grass had already thickly carpeted it.

At Plum Creek vast herds of buffalo rumbled up through the sand-hills to drink the sluggish waters of the Platte. Simpson had the train lay over for a hunt, in which Billy made first acquaintance with the bison and learned the rudiments of his future trade. The next day he learned still more. Five hundred buffalo, grazing along the road, were stampeded by a party of horsemen coming from the west, and suddenly swept down upon the slow-moving train. The oxen, catching the terror, tried to run, slued the heavy wagons in all directions, broke the tongues and tangled themselves in the gear. One bull buffalo, charging, got his horns caught in a wagon-chain. "It is a fact," said Cody, "that in his desperate efforts to free himself he not only snapped the strong chain in two, but broke the ox-yoke to which it was attached, and the last seen of him he was running

*And indeed there is much doubt whether even Cody himself made this journey to Utah. Connelley is convinced that Cody did not go over the trail until after the Civil War.

toward the hills with it hanging from his horns."

Mere mention of such a scene was enough to set the fictionist's imagination afire. Out of the stampede Prentiss Ingraham fashioned an adventure and a wholly spurious origin for the title of Buffalo Bill.

One day, according to Ingraham, the boy had ridden out of camp and shot an antelope. He dismounted to cut up his quarry. While he was busy, his horse took fright and ran away. Looking up to discover the cause, Cody saw thousands of buffalo thundering toward him at terrific speed. To save himself from being run down he climbed a cottonwood tree. From this greater height he was able to descry a band of mounted Indians. In dime novel convention, any Indians anywhere were sure to kill and scalp a lone white boy:

"The center of the herd was headed directly for the tree. To remain was certain death at the hands of the redskins. To leave, as he intended, by the means of a buffalo was a fearful risk. But he would take it and accordingly he strapped his rifle upon his back, picked out a buffalo, and swinging quickly from a limb, watched his chance and dropped. . . . Maddened with fright the bull bounded into the air, snorted wildly, gored those in advance and soon led the herd. Billy kept his seat nobly, a grim smile upon his face, and occasionally glanced backward at the herd and the pursuing Indians."

Fortunately, the stampede went straight toward camp. The buffalo on which the boy was riding became tired and dropped behind. As the herd swept past the wagons, Wild Bill Hickok, seeing his young friend's predicament, raised his rifle and dropped the buffalo.

"From that day," said Ingraham, "the boy was known as Buffalo Billy, the letter Y being later discarded."

The bull-train crept on, skirting the South Platte, that wide, muddy, grass-grown stream of which Artemus Ward said, "The Platte would be a good river if set on edge." A discouraged native once remarked that this river could not be ferried for lack of water, could not be bridged because there was no bottom for piers and could not be forded because of the quicksand. It had to be forded, however, not far beyond the point where the north and south forks joined, and the tall grass met the short grass of the slope toward the mountains.

The journal of a pioneer written in the 'fifties pictures the scene as it must have appeared to Bill Cody: "There is perhaps more fun, more excitement, more whipping, more swearing and more whiskey drank at this place than at any other point on the Platte River. Many herd of cattle were being driven over when we crossed, and the dumb brutes seemed to have an inclination to go any way but the right one. Loose cattle, teams, horses, mules, oxen, men and boys all in a muss; the men swearing and whipping, the cattle bellowing, the horses neighing and the boys shouting made music for the multitude."

This exciting locality was on the outskirts of Cody's future homeland. A few miles to the east was the site of Fort McPherson where he was to build his first cabin. At the fork of the river was the site of North Platte, the town where he was to put up a pretentious house and become a prominent citizen.

But there was neither town nor building for miles around when Lew Simpson whipped his animals across the ford, and swung north to the Bluewater, then west again. They left behind the rolling treeless prairie and the sand-hills. Through miles of tortured land dotted with sage-brush and white with patches of alkali, through

canyon and gorge, they climbed up to the pass and the Great Divide.

Eighteen miles from Green River, in the Rocky Mountains, the wagons made noon-day camp while Simpson, with some of the men and the boy, drove the cattle off to water at a creek. On the way back they were suddenly halted and surrounded by twenty mounted men, heavily armed with double-barreled shotguns, rifles and revolvers.

"I'll trouble you for your six-shooters, gentlemen," said the leader, and when Simpson retorted angrily, he added, "If you make a move you're a dead man."

It was Smith, the Mormon, out to destroy the supplies intended for Johnston's army.

"I know you now; you are a spying scoundrel," said Lew Simpson, for he recognized Smith as the man who a few days earlier had mysteriously joined their outfit and as mysteriously disappeared.

Disarming his captives, Smith led them back to their camp. He had already taken the wagonmen there by surprise and was preparing to burn the train. Simpson demanded that he spare one wagon with six yoke of oxen and enough provisions to last until the men could reach Fort Bridger. "You're a brute if you don't do this," he said. When Smith consented, he added, "I think you are a mean coward to set us afloat in a hostile country without giving us our arms."

After this third epithet, Smith weakened and said, "Simpson, you are too brave a man to be turned adrift here without any means of defense. You shall have your revolvers and guns."

So with their weapons and their single wagon, the disconsolate freighters pressed on westward, pausing only to look back and watch the flames that arose from

their burning bacon and flour, and to hear the detonation of their store of army cartridges.

Under the spell of later press agents Cody bettered the story by saying that the Mormons "had taken away every rifle and every pistol we possessed," and instead of letting them proceed to Fort Bridger, ordered them to hike to the East. *"Turned adrift on the desert with not a weapon to defend ourselves was hardly a pleasant prospect. It meant a walk of a thousand miles home to Leavenworth. The wagon was loaded to its full capacity. There was nothing to do but walk. I was not yet twelve years old, but I had to walk with the rest the full thousand miles, and we made nearly thirty miles a day. . . . I wore out three pair of moccasins on that journey. After a month of hard travel we reached Leavenworth."*

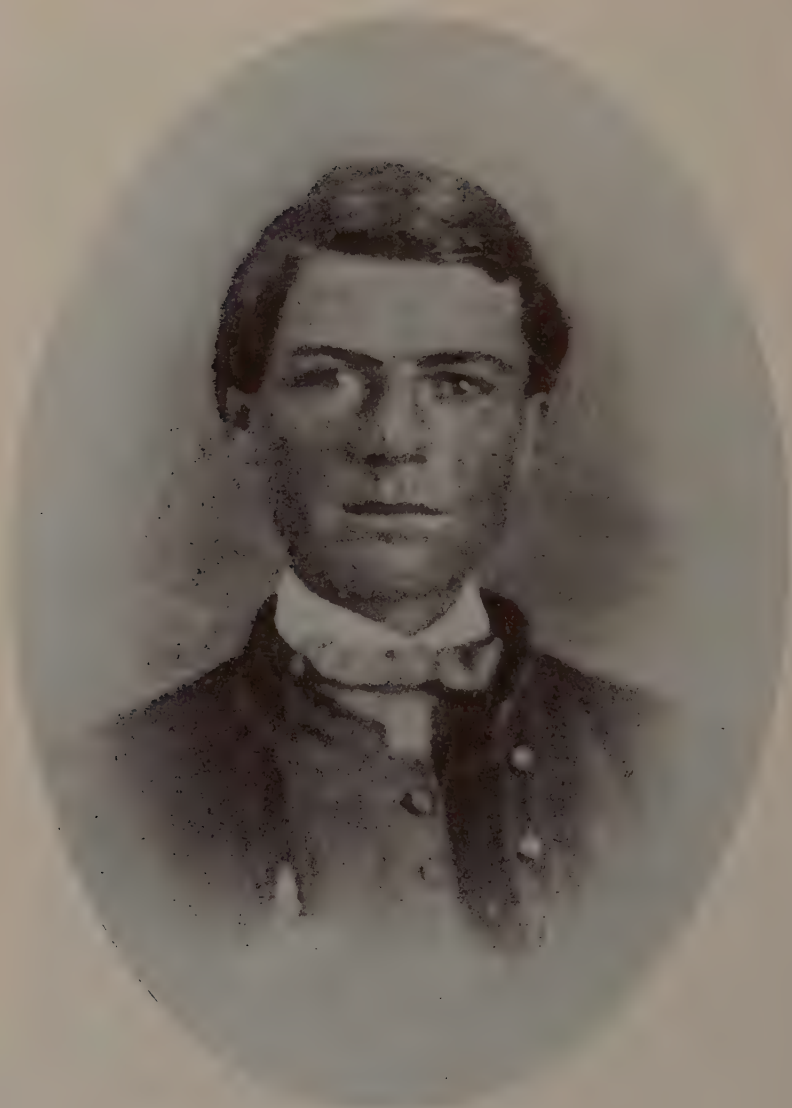
Since both accounts are the work of able pens, and credence must be given to one or the other, it is not unjust to accept the earlier, which conforms more closely to the government records of Mormon pillage. It goes on: "After reaching the fort, it being far in November, we decided to spend the winter there with about four hundred other employees of Russell, Majors and Waddell, rather than attempt a return, which would have exposed us to many dangers and the severity of the rapidly approaching winter."

It was indeed a severe winter. Fort Bridger lay on the western slope of the Rockies, in pastureland, seven thousand feet above sea-level. An army officer has given a picture of the approach at that time: "The earth has no more lifeless, treeless, grassless desert; it contains scarcely a wolf to glut itself on the hundreds of dead and frozen animals which for thirty miles nearly block the road."



From the Albert Davis Collection

Wild Bill Hickok



Cody at eighteen, when he enlisted in the Union Army, although "I had no idea of doing anything of the kind"

The Mormons were entrenched all about, cutting off the supplies of the army which was in tents a few miles down the valley. Rations were short and mules and oxen had to be killed for food. Against the bitter cold—sometimes thirty below zero—sage-brush and wood for fuel had to be carried for miles, on hand-drawn sleds or on the backs of men and boys.

Though Wild Bill Hickok was not in that wretched company, an older and even more fascinating figure was thereabout. Billy Cody must have watched with awe the casual comings and goings of Jim Bridger, the first genuine scout that he had seen in action.

Years earlier Bridger had discovered this pass into the Salt Lake Valley, and had settled on a ranch of two acres surrounded by an eight-foot stockade. Within, on one side, was his house in which he kept at least two squaws and many half-breed papooses. On the other side was the store from which he dispensed groceries, dry-goods, liquor and ammunition. Rude in dress and manner, a hard trader, a good drinker and a tall talker, he was the true type of pioneer—and he had forty years of it, from the fur-trapping of the 'twenties to the Indian campaigns of the 'sixties. This winter he was employed as guide for Johnston's army.

Truce came in the spring; the Mormon war was over, and the civilians could start for home. They got as far as Fort Laramie before they had their first square meal. There, Simpson was given charge of two heavy wagon-trains going back to Leavenworth. The boy went along, and was soon again in dire peril.

At Ash Hollow Simpson sent his trains off the regular trail and along a detour down the North Platte, although this locality was known to be full of bands of Sioux and Cheyenne. The two trains were traveling

fifteen miles apart. One morning Simpson left the rear train, meaning to overtake the one ahead. To go with him he chose his assistant, George Woods, and the boy Cody. They had ridden only seven miles when a band of Indians came out of a ravine and charged them at full speed.

"I thought that our end had come this time. Simpson, however, was equal to the occasion, for with wonderful promptness he jumped from his jaded mule, and in a trice shot his own animal and ours also, and ordered us to assist him to jerk their bodies into a triangle. This being quickly done, we got inside the barricade of mule flesh and were prepared to receive the Indians. We were each armed with a Mississippi Yager and two revolvers, and as the Indians came swooping down on our improvised fort, we opened fire with such good effect that three fell dead at the first volley. This caused them to retreat out of range, as with two exceptions they were armed with bows and arrows, and therefore, to approach near enough to do execution would expose at least several of them to certain death. Seeing that they could not take our little fortification, or drive us from it, they circled around several times, shooting their arrows at us. One of these struck George Woods in the left shoulder, inflicting only a slight wound, however, and several lodged in the bodies of the dead mules; otherwise they did us no harm. The Indians finally galloped off to a safe distance, where our bullets could not reach them, and seemed to be holding a council. This was a lucky move for us, for it gave us an opportunity to reload our guns and pistols, and prepare for the next charge of the enemy. During the brief cessation of hostilities, Simpson extracted the arrow from Woods' shoulder, and put an immense quid of tobacco on the

wound. Woods was then ready for business again."

After one more attack, the Indians moved off and again seemed to be holding a council. The besieged trio dug themselves in. They fully expected that the rear wagon-train would be along during the afternoon to relieve them. But for some reason it did not come up until ten o'clock the following morning.

The story shows on the face of it what an extraordinary series of events was necessary to get Billy Cody into this predicament. Why Simpson made a detour in hostile country; why out of the four hundred men he was carrying he should have chosen to take a twelve-year-old boy on the dangerous ride; why the rear-train, although only seven miles behind, should have been eighteen hours late in catching up, and why two men and a boy should be worth so much trouble to the Indians, are secrets known only to the minds of Wild West romancers.

During the night the Indians set fire to the prairie, but the buffalo grass was too short to make much flame. Finally they formed a great circle, dismounted and sat down as if determined to starve out the little party. At last the rescuing train arrived. "About ten o'clock, we began to hear in the distance the loud and sharp reports of the big bull-whips, which were handled with great dexterity by the teamsters, and cracked like rifle-shots. These were as welcome sounds to us as were the notes of the bagpipes to the besieged garrison at Lucknow, when the reenforcements were coming up and the pipers were heard playing, 'The Campbells are coming.' In a few moments we saw the lead or head wagon coming slowly over the ridge." So the Indians galloped off, the tobacco on Woods' wound was replaced by a bandage, Simpson was glorified as a great strategist and another adventure was written in the record of Buffalo Bill.

THE MAKING OF BUFFALO BILL

He reached home to find that his mother, ill though she was, had opened a little hotel in Salt Creek Valley. The family needed the wages he could earn and she offered no further objection to his choice of a career. In a month he was out with another wagon-train, which took him to Fort Laramie, where he hung about for most of the summer.

Laramie was the most famous rendezvous on the frontier. It lay among the bluffs where the Laramie River flowed into the Platte. An adobe structure with walls twenty feet high and four feet thick, it was an impressive reminder to the Indians that the paleface meant to keep open the great transcontinental trail. For twenty years it had been the haven of the fur traders. Here there moved before the wide-open eyes of a lucky boy a procession of the great—"men whose names had long been known to me, but whom I never dared hope to see. Kit Carson, Jim Bridger, Baker, Richards and other of the celebrated hunters, trappers and Indian fighters were as familiar about the post as are bankers in Wall Street. All these men fascinated me, especially Carson, a small, dapper, quiet man whom everybody held in profound respect. I used to sit for hours and watch him and the others talk to the Indians in the sign language."

Buffalo Bill long cherished the hero-worship of that summer. It was Kit Carson after whom he named his only son, twelve years later.

Fur was still currency, and young Cody quit his rather monotonous job as bull-whacker to have a try at trapping. Two months with few pelts to show for it decided him to go back to Leavenworth. He joined up with two men who were going the same route. Known to posterity only as Scott and Charley, these two should perhaps be ranked among the worthies who left their

pattern on the boy. For they, as he put it, "were great lovers and consumers of 'tanglefoot' and they soon got gloriously drunk, keeping it up for three days." The great experience of that trip might be classified as alcoholic, but it is even more significant as an example of the cave literature which has such powerful appeal to the youthful imagination.

One night after being chased by Indians, the travelers took refuge in a ravine. Billy found a cave which in the dark seemed a safe place to sleep. They were snug inside when Charley struck a match to light his bedtime pipe. "Our subterranean bed-chamber was thus illuminated for a moment or two; I sprang to my feet in an instant, for a ghastly and horrifying sight was revealed to us. Eight or ten human skeletons lay scattered upon the ground!" It was the grave of massacred emigrants. Terrified, the three rushed out and rode for miles before daring to make camp again.

In February Billy got home, a tall husky boy now, filled with the ambition to be like the men he had known and seen. But his mother made one last plea for the advantages of an education. He could afford to stop work for a while; his pay had been accumulating for some time at the freighters' office. His mother went with him when he drew it. Alexander Majors remembered the incident:

"When he first came to me he had to sign the pay-roll each month by making the sign of the cross, his mark. He drew a man's pay, and earned every dollar of it. He always had his mother come to get his pay, and when one day he was told by the paymaster to come and 'make his mark and get his money,' his face flushed as he saw tears come into his mother's eyes, and heard her low uttered words:

THE MAKING OF BUFFALO BILL

“ ‘Oh, Willie! if you would only learn to write, how happy I would be.’

“From that day he began to study hard and learn to write; in fact his acquiring the art of penmanship got him into heaps of trouble, as ‘Will Cody,’ ‘Little Billy,’ ‘Billy the boy messenger,’ and ‘William Frederick Cody’ were written with the burnt end of a stick upon tents, wagon-covers and all tempting places, while he carved upon wagon-body, ox-yoke and where he could find suitable wood for his pen-knife to cut into, the name he would one day make famous.”

He went to school then for two and a half months, “the longest period of schooling that I ever received at any one time in my life.”

CHAPTER VI

PONY EXPRESS RIDER AND JAY-HAWKER

"PIKE'S PEAK or Bust!" The jocund cry was ringing along the Missouri. And with spring warming the prairie, would a boy who had known the trails sit sedately in school? Yellow gold had been brought out of the hills of western Kansas. The valley was alive with men bound for the diggings. General Sherman wrote from Leavenworth in April: "Steamboats arrive in twos and threes each day, loaded with people for the new gold region. The streets are full of people buying flour, bacon and groceries, with wagons and outfits, and all around the town are little camps preparing to go west."

It was not hard for Billy Cody to find other boys to go with him. They took the new route into the cluster of shacks, tents and Indian lodges that were the nucleus of Denver, "giant young city of the plains." Here were to be played out the bitterest scenes in the tragedy of Cody's old age, and among the majestic snow-capped mountains looking down from the west was the peak that was to hold his tomb. Now Denver was only a turbulent mining camp, with half-naked Indians lounging about, with the first Concord stage-coaches rolling in in ten days from Leavenworth, and wagons climbing out over the foot-hills to the gold streams.

Billy and his companions went on through Golden to Black Hawk. They labored hopefully for two months, but none of them knew anything about mining. Concluding that prospecting for gold was not their forte, they fell in with the melancholy eastward procession of

failures. The revised slogan, scrawled on the soiled canvas of the prairie-schooner, was, "Busted, by Gosh!"

Not even having a wagon, the boys tried navigating the Platte on a raft. Wrecked by an eddy near Julesburg, they lost all their gear, and had to swim for it.

Here the narrative breaks down in confusion. There are not months enough in these years to account for all that the boy is supposed to have been doing. The biographies conflict hopelessly. His sister Helen said that he had never even reached the gold-fields. He himself said that at Julesburg he was hired at once as a pony express rider; but the pony express was not started until the next year. The last story he told was that he went home with a wagon-train, which seems most likely.

This was, anyway, a remarkable wagon-train. On its way out it had transported a huge steam-boiler, part of the mining equipment that was being rushed to Denver. Attacked, the wagon-boss had swung the great boiler round and pointed it at the Indians. They had thought it was the biggest howitzer they had ever seen and had fled as fast as their ponies could travel.

It is appropriate to recall Frank Root's anecdote of Ranger Jones, who lived in that country and upheld its best story-telling traditions. One day, after Ranger had delivered himself of a personal experience so blood-curdling that a roomful had sat at breathless attention, another old-timer broke all courteous precedent by saying, "I hope you don't expect me to believe that story."

Ranger looked his questioner in the eye for a long time, and then replied, "Well—no—really I don't. The fact is, I have lived out here in this western country so long, and have been in the habit of telling so many damn lies, the truth of it is, now, that I don't know when I can believe myself."



Louisa Frederici Cody, at about the time of her marriage to Buffalo Bill.
She was nearly three years older than her husband



Copyright Stacy, Brooklyn, New York

Buffalo Bill won his title by killing buffalo to supply meat for the workmen building the Kansas Pacific Railroad. This painting by C. H. Stephens shows his method accurately. He would ride abreast of the leaders, and by shooting them force the herd to run in a circle

The tales about Cody in these years between ten and sixteen fall into three groups; those which he flatly denied with a good-natured guffaw; those which he did not endorse but permitted others to circulate; and those which he told in his own right, sometimes one way and sometimes another.

There was his rescue of Mamie Perkins when he was fifteen years old, as related by Helen. Mamie Perkins was one of an emigrant family traveling under protection of a wagon-train with which Cody was serving. She had gone to the river for water. Suddenly a lone and enormous buffalo charged through the camp, overturning wagons and boxes. The men blazed away with rifles and revolvers but could not stop him. He bore down upon Mamie, returning from the river with her pail. Will, wakened from a sound sleep, seized his rifle, ran after the buffalo and fired once. Grown-up marksmen had missed, but young Will was a sure-shot.

"The huge animal lurched, staggered a few yards farther, then dropped within a dozen feet of the terrified child. A shout of relief went up, and while a crowd of praising men gathered about the embryo buffalo-hunter, Mamie was taken to her mother. Will never relished hearing his praises sung, and as the camp determined to pedestal him as a hero, he ran away and hid in his tent."

This bears some resemblance to Cody's own story of how he saved a little girl. This child was three years old. She was playing at the door of her parents' cabin, when for some reason a huge buffalo charged straight at her. When Cody came riding along, the rushing animal was barely fifteen yards from the child, who was squealing with delight. The boy raised his rifle and fired one shot. The buffalo "came to a stop with his head not six inches from the little girl's knee, stone-dead."

THE MAKING OF BUFFALO BILL

Strange hardships marked the winter of '59. Billy went on a trapping expedition along the Republican River, with an older boy who is called variously Harrington and Phillips, but on whose first name, Dave, there is substantial agreement. While catching hundreds of beaver and otter, they established themselves in a cozy dugout, built of poles and sod, with a good fireplace. One day a bear killed one of their oxen and was about to leap upon Dave, when Billy fired and saved his life. This good deed was repaid a few days later. While stalking some elk, Billy slipped on the icy bank of a creek and broke his leg just above the ankle. Dave ran to lift him.

"I urged him to shoot me and thus end my misery," said Cody. But Dave was a true and grateful friend. He got the younger boy back to the dugout and set the fracture as well as he could, for by an odd coincidence he had had some surgical experience, back in Illinois. Then he gathered plenty of fire-wood, placed provisions handy, and started for the nearest settlement, a hundred and twenty-five miles away, to bring a new yoke of oxen.

The boy in the dugout kept track of the days by cutting notches in a stick. On the twelfth day he was awakened by Indians, their faces smeared with the red paint which showed that they were on the war-path. The younger braves would surely have killed the crippled boy had it not been that among them was old Rain-in-the-Face, a chief with whom he had been friendly at Fort Laramie. But they took away his weapons and most of his food and cooking utensils.

Many more days passed. The snow fell ceaselessly, covering the dugout to a depth of several feet. Wolves howled, ran over the roof and scratched at the door. The food ran short and the fire-wood was buried in drifts.

The prisoner ate raw frozen meat and drank melted snow. On the twenty-ninth day Dave returned, after a terrific battle with the snow, bringing oxen to haul them out. "It was several months after that," said Cody, "before I entirely recovered the use of my leg." Nevertheless, he was soon riding the pony express.

The gold rushes had greatly increased the demand for swift mail service across the continent. Stage-coaches were getting through from St. Louis to Sacramento in twenty-two days. Telegraph and railways were reaching westward, but not rapidly enough for eager California. In February the wires were strung between St. Joseph and Leavenworth. In March the first length of railroad iron was laid down on Kansas soil. On April third Russell started the pony express, which hurled the mail through from the Missouri to the Pacific in nine days "on horse flesh and human nerve."

Russell bought the fastest ponies he could find. He built a chain of stations, ten to fifteen miles apart, and stocked them with fodder. And he hired eighty dare-devils for his riders. For speed they had to be light in the saddle, and for the safety of the mails they had to be brave and reliable. Many of them were boys. The youngest of all must have been William F. Cody, for he was only fourteen years old at that time.

At first, he said, he was given an easy route, forty-five miles, which he had to make in three hours, with three changes of mounts.* Fearing that riding fifteen miles an hour would soon shake him to pieces, his mother begged him to give it up, and, after a while, because she was ill,

*This "easy route" was probably the regular road between Leavenworth and St. Joseph, over which Cody rode as the "office boy on horseback," carrying mail to be placed in the pony express bags at St. Joseph. Connelley believes that this is the only pony express riding ever done by Cody.

he did so and stayed home to work about the hotel and farm. Before long—he said it was the next year, but it must have been in that same summer of 1860—he was back again. This time he went farther west with one of Lew Simpson's bull-trains, carrying a letter of recommendation to Alf Slade, the agent at Horseshoe.

Thus he met one of the genuine killers of the day. Slade was a fiend when drunk, and a deadly shot. Once, in the street at Rocky Ridge, he pointed out a man who had lately annoyed him. "Gentlemen," he remarked, "it's a good twenty-yard shot. I'll clip the third button on his coat." He did precisely that. In observance of the etiquette of such matters, he officiated at the funeral, which was attended by the awed bystanders.

In one fight Slade is supposed to have killed three or four Indians single-handed, then cut off their ears and sent them to the chief. Ears were his specialty. When he finally trapped his enemy, Old Jules, he tied him up and amused himself by shooting to see how near he could come without shedding blood. At last he shot off one ear. Then, bored, he ordered his gang to pump Jules full of lead. He wore the ear as a watch charm, and nailed up the other one on the corral.

Slade was an efficient agent because he killed or scared away all thieves, highwaymen and others who might hamper the smooth operation of his division. Later he became one of the most notorious highwaymen of the Northwest, and was eventually strung up by vigilantes in Montana.

He was not a bad sort in the pony express days. He thought Billy Cody was too young for the pony express. The boy retorted that he already ridden on Bill Trotter's division.

"What! are you the boy that was riding there,

and was called the youngest rider on the road?

"'I am the same boy,' I replied, confident that everything was now all right with me.

"'I have heard of you before. I'll give you a trial anyhow.'"

The route assigned to Cody climbed through seventy-six miles of rugged country, from Red Butte on the North Platte to the Three Crossings of the Sweetwater. It was a rough and risky one, much liked by hostile Indians and road agents. "I never was quite sure when I started when I should reach my destination, or whether I should ever reach it at all." At the western end the trail wound through a canyon where the river often boiled from wall to wall. Three times within a few rods the rider must plunge and splash across.

Boy and beast would arrive at the station wet and weary, ready for food and sleep, and glad to turn the mail over to the next rider. The mail was in a mochila, a leather pouch slung over the saddle, with a padlocked pocket at each of its four corners. The letters were written on thin tissue, wrapped in oilskin and stamped with postage which sometimes was reckoned as high as fifty dollars. The jealous schedule gave but two minutes for changing the mochila to a fresh horse.

One day, when Cody rode in, he found that the station tender had a horse saddled, but no rider ready to cover the next eighty-five miles to Rocky Ridge. The man who should have kept the mails moving got drunk last night. He talked himself into a fight. One of the boys took a shot at him. Fact is, he was dead.

Young Cody, weary as he was, swung up on the fretting horse and was off again. At Rocky Ridge he met the rider from the West, took the mochila with the east-bound mail and turned back, rode the double route once

more, straight through Three Crossings, and came in to Red Butte on schedule time, some twenty-one hours after he had set out. That made a continuous ride of more than three hundred and twenty miles, over which he had averaged fifteen miles an hour, and had tired out twenty mounts.

"This stands on the records," he would say with pride, "as being the longest pony express journey ever made."

Jack Keetley also claimed the longest ride, but while some say his was three hundred and forty miles, others calculated it as only three hundred. Keetley did not even stop for food, but ate as he rode, and his pony brought him the last five miles into Seneca sound asleep in the saddle.

Pony Bob Haslam, greatest of all the riders, once did three hundred and eighty miles. But he had eleven hours' rest in the course of the ride, and came through somewhat late.*

Cody's ride is recorded by the most careful historians of the pony express as "one of the longest" and "probably the longest continuous performance without a formal rest period in the history of this or any other courier service." It is the one feat that distinguishes him among the express riders, many of whom did longer and harder service and had more adventures than he.

For a fourteen-year old boy, however, he was credited with adventures in plenty. Once he was held up by two mail robbers. Having been warned, he was carrying an extra pouch, empty. He flung this at them. One stooped to pick it up and Cody rode his pony over him. Whipping

*Years later the man who had admired Pony Bob in his youth was able to give him a job with the Wild West Show, and when Pony Bob died in old age Cody was one of a few who chipped in to give him decent burial.

out his revolver he sent a bullet through the other, and spurred on with the mail saved. In Helen's version of this there was only one highwayman, but Billy brought him in tied to his horse, and offered the dejected prisoner as an excuse for being late on his run for the first time. Cody never adopted this yarn, but he did tell how, only a week after his record ride, on the same route between Red Butte and Three Crossings, he was jumped by a band of Sioux. Luckily he had one of the fastest horses on the division. Lying flat, he got away in a shower of bullets. At the next station he found the stock-tender dead, killed by the same Indians, and all the animals gone, so that he had to push his horse twelve miles farther.

The Indians were getting desperate. There had been no genuine fighting since 1855 and the local clashes had usually been the fault of white men. President Grant's Commission, looking back in 1869, said: "The history of the border white man's connection with the Indians is a sickening record of murder, outrage, robbery and wrongs committed by the former, as the rule, and occasional savage outbreaks and unspeakably barbarous deeds of retaliation by the latter, as the exception." Some few of the professional Indian fighters were honest enough to admit, as one of the best of them, Kit Carson, said under oath, that "as a general thing, the difficulties arose from aggressions on the part of the whites."

When the Indian struck it was in defense of his home and his food. He struck, not yet in general warfare, but more and more often at scattered and lonely points. The stations of the pony express and the lone riders became favorite points of attack. And always the white man struck back even harder.

With gusto Cody described a madcap expedition which was his first experience in organized assault upon the

Indians. As was fitting, the man who led him into it was Wild Bill Hickok.* Indians had been driving off the horses from the stations. The raids were playing havoc with the overland service and the pony express was suspended for a while. Some forty of the men who were laid off decided to go out after the "red-skinned thieves." Wild Bill, who had been driving stage, was chosen leader. The party followed the trail left by the shod hoofs of their stolen stock, north to Clear Creek, where they found the Indians encamped. There were too many to fight, and Wild Bill decided to risk a stampede, just before dark. Cody said:

"The dash upon the enemy was a complete surprise to them. They were so overcome with astonishment that they did not know what to make of it. We could not have astounded them any more had we dropped down into their camp from the clouds. They did not recover from the surprise of this sudden charge until after we had ridden pell-mell through their camp and got away with our own horses as well as theirs. We at once circled the horses around towards the south, and after getting them on the south side of Clear Creek, some twenty of our men—just as the darkness was coming on—rode back and gave the Indians a few parting shots. We then took up our line of march for Sweetwater Bridge, where we arrived four days afterwards with all our own horses and about one hundred captured Indian ponies."

This victory was celebrated by what Cody described as a "grand spree."

"There seemed to be no limit to the rioting and carousing; revelry reigned supreme. On the third day of the orgy, Slade, who had heard the news, came up to the bridge and took a hand in the 'fun,' as it was called. To

*Cody's own first mention of Wild Bill was in connection with this raid.

add some variation and excitement to the occasion, Slade got into a quarrel with a stage-driver and shot him, killing him almost instantly.

"The boys became so elated as well as 'elevated' over their success against the Indians that most of them were in favor of going back and cleaning out the whole Indian race. One old driver especially, Dan Smith, was eager to open a war on all the hostile nations, and had the drinking been continued another week he certainly would have undertaken the job, single-handed and alone."*

From this point on for a dozen years the lives of the two Bills were interwoven, both in fact and in fiction. Sometimes Wild Bill is described as a pony express rider, which he never was, being much too heavy. The most brazen of all the lies is that of one Nebraska Ned, who gave Buffalo Bill the credit of killing the McCanles gang. That historic clean-up was Wild Bill's greatest exploit. It was performed on July 12, 1861, at Rock Creek, Nebraska. There have been many estimates of the number of men killed by Wild Bill that day. In his *True Tales* Cody said that his hero killed the entire gang of ten desperadoes in a single-handed combat in which he was wounded by three bullets and eleven buckshot, and cut in thirteen places.

"The truth of the matter," says William E. Connelley, Secretary of the Kansas Historical Society, "is that Wild Bill killed but one man outright in that fight. He mortally wounded two more." Wild Bill did not get a scratch, for the McCanles gang never got their guns into

*Other writers date this raid in the autumn of 1858, two years before Cody met Slade, when he was only twelve years old, and before the pony express had been founded. But Wild Bill was not on the Oregon Trail before 1860. If the raid occurred at all, it must have been during Cody's service with the pony express.

action. It will be remembered that it was Wild Bill's specialty to shoot first.

Ned Buntline greatly complicated the McCanles episode. In his novel it was Jake "M'Kandlas" and his gang who had murdered Cody's father, before the very eyes of his horror-stricken family. And the boy had *spoken as he stood erect over the body of his dead father, weaponless and alone. . . . "You, Jake M'Kandlas, have murdered my father. You, base cowards, who saw him do this dark deed, spoke no word to restrain him. I am only little Bill, his son, but as God in heaven hears me now, I will kill every father's son of you before the beard grows on my face."* Later he had said to his mother, "*There were thirty of them beside old M'Kandlas, and it may take me some time to kill them all.*"

No true friend of Cody would try to steal the glory of the final extinction of McCanles from his elder comrade, Wild Bill. Indeed it may be put down to the credit of Buffalo Bill that in forty-odd years as a showman he never put his signature to any of the many yarns about his shooting of white men, except one.

The one white man whom Cody claimed as the victim of his own gun was a horse-thief. He told the story as part of his experience with the pony express.

Slade, being fond of the daring boy, made him a "supernumerary," which meant that he had little to do. One day he rode out toward Laramie Peak, alone, to hunt. At nightfall, having shot two sage-hens, he was returning to the spot where he had tied his horse. Suddenly he found himself in the midst of a gang of bad men. Two of them he recognized; they had been among Lew Simpson's teamsters. Bent on detaining him, a pair of the thieves went out with him, in the gathering darkness, to bring in his horse.

"I purposely dropped one of the sage-hens, and asked the man behind me to pick it up. While he was hunting for it on the ground, I quickly pulled out one of my Colt's revolvers and struck him a tremendous blow on the back of the head, knocking him senseless to the ground. I then instantly wheeled around and saw that the man ahead, who was only a few feet distant, had heard the blow and had turned to see what was the matter, his hand upon his revolver. We faced each other at about the same instant, but before he could fire, as he tried to do, I shot him dead in his tracks. Then, jumping on my horse, I rode down the creek as fast as possible."

By abandoning the horse a little later he was able to throw the pursuers off his track. Just before daylight he trudged into Horseshoe. Slade went after the thieves with a posse, but all they found was a new-made grave, confirmation that the fifteen-year old boy had got his man.

There was little further excitement in hanging about Horseshoe. Occasionally he rode express, but mostly he was grooming, feeding and saddling the ponies for others to ride. Day by day as the riders came in they brought tremendous news from the outside world. In November it had been of Lincoln's election, in December of the secession of South Carolina, in January of shots fired at the flag on the steamer *Star of the West*, in February of Jefferson Davis' statement that war was inevitable. In March the couriers broke their record by carrying across the continent in seven days and seventeen hours Lincoln's inaugural address.

In April the word came, "War is declared."

The pony express was now more essential than ever to link California with the East. It went on, but at ruinous expense; the losses wiped out Russell, Majors and Waddell. They were no longer rich and generous employers.

Their Central Overland, California and Pike's Peak Express began to be called by the drivers, "Clean Out of Cash and Poor Pay."

One after another the riders deserted to enlist in the army. To Billy Cody came more letters telling of his mother's illness and how she had missed him during the long year he had been away. "I decided to pay her a visit, and at the same time determined, if government service promised better pay and more excitement than I had been getting out of my engagement with the express company, to join the army." He went home and found employment even more exciting and profitable.

While the raw recruits of North and South grappled along the Potomac, the hardened veterans of the border conflict between Kansas and Missouri waged with renewed vigor their parochial war. And the boy Cody had his own private feud with the Missouri ruffians who had persecuted his father.

Ned Buntline's novel sketched the torture which the vengeful son conjured up for the leader of that murderous gang:* "*I want to take him back to the spot where he murdered my father, and roast him there over a slow fire. Death—a mere man's death—is too good for him. He wants, and shall have, a taste here of what he'll get when he is dead!*"

"*'Mate, you're as bad as the reds, by thunder you are!'*" said Wild Bill.

"*'Yes, when I think of him and his gang, I am. Why should I not be? Can the memory of my good father, butchered in cold blood before his poor wife and helpless children, ever pass away? No, Bill, never—never! I will never feel that he rests easy in his grave while one*

*Buntline took a novelist's privilege and kept McCanles alive, under the name of M'Kandlas, long after Wild Bill had killed him.

of them is alive to boast of the black deed he has done. I have with my own hand killed two-thirds of them, and until all are gone—and by my hand, too, I will not feel content. I heard the wretch groaning from pain this morning. It was music to my soul. Oh, how I wanted to whisper in his ear, "Fiend, the pursuer is at hand! Your time is drawing near; the spirit of the murdered hovers near to exult over your tortured end!" Bill, I could glory in every pain that racked his frame. I could see his eyeballs start in agony from his head—the beaded sweat, blood-colored, ooze from his clammy skin—each nerve and tendon quivering like the strings of a harp struck by a maniac hand. Oh, how I could gloat over his howling misery! And it is coming, it is coming—his time. When it does, mercy will not plead to me—not a throe, not a pulsation would I spare for the wealth of all the world!"

According to his sister, Cody at first had wanted to enlist but "mother would not listen to the idea; she made him promise not to go into the war." A Leavenworth man named Chandler was forming a company of twenty-five to carry the war in their own fashion to the non-combatants of secessionist Missouri. So the late pony express rider became a jay-hawker.

The procedure was to cross the river in disguise by twos and threes and meet after dark, when Chandler would dispatch them to certain farms where he knew there were good horses. "Few of us," said Cody, "ever returned empty-handed; some would frequently have captured three or four horses. Then we would strike out for the Kansas line."

In later days Cody was hard put to it to excuse this outlawry. Sometimes he would gloat, "We were the biggest gang of thieves on record. Why, we would steal

clothes from the men and give them to the women." On other occasions he would say, "This may look to you like horse-stealing, but the war times had dulled people's consciences." Missourians had been none too gentle with the Kansans and had killed his own father. "I thought that I had a right to hound them too, and drive off their horses and cattle and make life miserable for them."

His mother did not agree, and told the young man that he was in a dirty business. There is no evidence that he took part in the house-burning and shooting which finally compelled the federal army to suppress the young patriots. After some of the crowd were put under arrest for thus violating the rules of war, Cody decided that he had had enough.

Fortunately, Wild Bill showed up in Leavenworth, boss of a wagon-train going south with army supplies. Ned Buntline told how the boy introduced his pard to his mother: "*'This is my mate—this is Bill Hitchcock, the best friend I ever had, or ever will have, outside of our own family. Three times has he saved me from being wiped out. Once by the Ogallalas, once when I was taken with the cramps in the ice cold Platte, last winter, and once when old Jake M'Kandlas and his gang had a sure set on me. He and I will sink or swim in the same river, and that's a safe bet. Bill, that's my mother, and a better never trod the footstool!'*"

"*Wild Bill, with a natural grace, bent his proud head, and took the hand of the lady, saying, in a tremulous tone:*

"*'I'm glad to see you, ma'am, for I've a good old mother that I haven't seen this many a day, and this rayther brings her up afore me!'*"

Women liked Wild Bill for his gentle ways and soft voice. Mrs. Cody accepted him with maternal love and

was glad to let her son go along with him and his wagon-train.

They delivered their freight at Springfield, Missouri. There they heard great news about the horse-racing which was alleviating the strain of war at St. Louis, where Union headquarters were. Wild Bill had brought with him a fast running horse, Old Mountain. Gamblers always, the two friends hurried to St. Louis and found it easy enough to make a match. They bet not only every dollar they had, but they bet Old Mountain himself. Cody, still a light-weight, rode him in the race. They lost, and found themselves broke and stranded in the biggest town they had ever seen.

Wild Bill went to military headquarters and got a job as scout in the army. Cody was still too young for such work, and Bill borrowed enough money to send him back to Leavenworth by steamboat.*

For the next two years Cody knocked about, almost continually in the saddle. He rode to Fort Larned with dispatches. He ranged about the country, getting mounts for the cavalry. He joined an expedition of volunteers against the Indians along the Santa Fé Trail, in which, he said, "we had several engagements with the Indians, but they were of no great importance."

When Quantrell took a leaf out of the book of the Kansas freebooters and swooped down in a series of raids, Bill Tuff formed the Red-Leg Scouts to operate against him. Several of Cody's old friends were joining, among them Johnny Frey, the famous pony express rider. Guerrilla fighting was more nearly legitimate than jay-hawking, so Cody became a Red-Leg. It was a wild and

*Connelley says: "Wild Bill and Cody were never together on the trip to Springfield, and they never had a horse entered in the races at St. Louis. They did not meet until 1864."

on the whole a profitable employment, for there was loot. "Whenever we were in Leavenworth," he said, "we had a festive time. We usually attended all the balls in full force and ran things to suit ourselves."

In the summer of 1863 he went west with a small wagon-train, probably as a teamster. Arriving at Denver, he found a letter saying that his mother was ill again. He hurried home to find that this time it was serious. Late in November, she died.

One would suppose that a mother's death, at least, would have been held sacred by the press agents. But Mary Cody's own daughter allowed it to be colored to suit the design of her brother's publicity. Helen's book contained these dying words of her mother to the boy: *"I have not wished you to enlist in the war. . . . But now you are nearly eighteen, and if when I am gone your country needs you in the strife of which we in Kansas know the bitterness, I bid you go as a soldier in behalf of the cause for which your father gave his life."*

With his mother dead, Will is made to exclaim, "'I can't go home when I know mother is no longer there. I am going to Leavenworth to see Eugene Hathaway. I shall stay with him tonight.'"

"The next morning," concluded his sister, "we were much surprised to see him and Eugene ride into the yard, both clothed in the blue uniforms of United States soldiers."

The fact of the matter is that Cody did not enlist until February, 1864. For two months after his mother's death, he himself said candidly, he led in Leavenworth a "dissolute and reckless life with gamblers, drunkards and bad characters generally." And, "I was becoming a very hard case."

When the Seventh Kansas came home for a thirty-day

furlough, Leavenworth gave them a rousing reception. The celebration, into which Cody threw himself with his habitual gusto, resulted in his becoming a soldier without in the least intending to do so. His friends in the regiment urged him to enlist. "I had no idea of doing anything of the kind," he said, "but one day, after having been under the influence of bad whiskey, I awoke to find myself a soldier in the Seventh Kansas. I did not remember how or when I had enlisted, but I saw I was in for it, and that it would not do for me to endeavor to back out."

CHAPTER VII

WAR AND COURTSHIP

WE CAN be certain of nothing that Cody did up to the age of eighteen. For all that contemporary records reveal, he might have spent all the days of his boyhood close to his home in the ordinary pursuits of a lad who hated school and loved horses. His enlistment is actually the first event of his life for which there is reliable documentary evidence. His adventures during the persecution of his father, the killing of his first Indian, his capture by the Mormons, his hunting and trapping and gold-seeking experiences, his shooting of the horse-thief, his free-booting—all rest upon his own and his sister's recollections, as set down by the writers who produced their books, after the dime novelists and the press agents had completely enveloped him in a glittering cloak of legend. His pony express record is accepted by historians, but all the testimony is hearsay and, as we have seen, the accounts of that period are highly confused.*

War Department files shed the first clear light on Cody. They disclose that he enlisted on February 19, 1864, at Fort Leavenworth, and record the personal description as follows: "Age, 18; born in Scott County, Iowa; occupation, teamster; eyes and hair, brown; complexion, fair; height 5' 10"."

There is irony in this first positive date. For almost

*Alexander Majors vouched for Cody's service on the overland trails, but Majors, when he told this story, was an old man in sore straits and grateful to Buffalo Bill for financial assistance, and Majors' book was written for him by none other than Prentiss Ingraham, the dime novelist.

immediately afterward the first genuine Indian depredations began along the trails, from which Cody was now surely absent. The patience of the tribes had broken at last. For several years the stage-coaches had been running with monotonous regularity. In very sight of the wigwams, ranches were springing up. Prairie-schooners, mule-teams, cattle, horsemen, moved in an almost continuous stream. More and more buffalo fell in the slaughter. A thin line of telegraph poles stalked all the way across the plains and mountains, and it was said that the mysterious wire went straight into the house of the Great White Father at Washington. Railroad tracks were creeping westward. And in the South the white men were bloodily occupied with their own hostilities.

The Indians struck hard all along the Platte Valley. They fell upon the stage stations, ran off the stock, burned the supplies and the buildings, waylaid and massacred emigrants. On the Little Blue they scalped a whole family of ten persons. West of Fort Kearney, not far from the spot where Billy Cody had become "the youngest Indian slayer on the plains," they killed nine men and carried off two women and two children. At Cottonwood Springs, near the site of Cody's future home, they captured a train of ten wagons and scalped four men.

Ranches were abandoned while refugees crowded into the forts for protection. Over five hundred miles the stage service was suspended. The raiders became so bold as to carry their barbarities to within a hundred and fifty miles of Atchison. Settlers and stage employees formed themselves into companies to fight the savages, and troops that could ill be spared from the eastern battle-lines were sent to help them.

In all this time of terror the youth, who was to live in fame as the greatest Indian fighter of them all, was

doomed to comparative idleness in the Union army. For many weeks his division did not move. His sister said that while they lay at Leavenworth the recruit was sent with dispatches to Fort Larned and was ambushed by five assassins, his father's old enemies and Confederate sympathizers. Her story of the attack curiously parallels the one about his earlier escape from this same band when he rode to warn his father. They were camped beside a creek which he had to ford, they were five to one, they discovered him just too late and he escaped in a furious gallop, firing over his horse's tail. When he returned by the same route he discovered that one of his bullets had found a fatal mark in a friend, who had been at the scene only to warn him. *"Will sat beside his old friend, moistening his pallid lips with water. In a very short time the end came. Will disposed the stiffening limbs, crossing the hands over the heart, and with a last backward look went out of the cabin."*

"It was his first experience in the bitterness and savagery of war, and he set a grave and downcast face against the remainder of his journey."

Will himself seems not to have remembered the incident, for it is not in his own accounts of the period of inaction after his enlistment.

His sister also gives us at this time the text of the earliest Cody letter that has been preserved. Being almost destitute, the motherless girls appealed to their brother for money. He replied,

MY DEAR SISTERS:

I am sorry that I cannot help you and furnish you with such clothes as you wish. At this writing I am so short of funds myself that if an entire Mississippi steamer could be bought for ten cents I couldn't pur-

chase the smokestack. I will soon draw my pay, and I will send it, every cent to you. So brave it out, girls, a little longer. In the meantime I will write to Al.

Lovingly,
WILL.

"Will also sent us the whole of his next month's pay as soon as he drew it." This was typical. Throughout his life Cody continued to be generous to his sisters and to their children as well as to dozens of hangers-on. Of the millions that he made as a showman, he fondly gave no inconsiderable part to his relatives, in dribblets, allowances and investments.

In May, 1864, General Grant announced that he intended to "fight it out on this line if it takes all summer." The Seventh Kansas was put on steamboats and moved south into Tennessee, marching thence into Mississippi, where, in July, it was in the Tupelo fight against Forrest. In October, in Missouri, it helped in checking Price's raid. Cody said that "for nearly six weeks we fought or skirmished every day." The meagerness of the encounters, however, may be judged from the United States Army Register, which shows that during the entire time of Cody's service his regiment took part in only eight engagements, and suffered only five casualties, one killed and four wounded.

He himself was really modest about his Civil War record. In his first autobiography he did not credit himself with any brave deeds or fierce fights. He did say, "I was soon made a non-commissioned officer," and this was not correct, for he remained a private throughout the war. He also said that he was used as a scout and rode ahead of the army to gather information, dressed in gray clothes or Missouri jeans. Building on this,

Helen's book made him a full-fledged and daring spy. She said:

"In common walks of life to play the spy is an ignoble rôle; yet the work has to be done, and there must be men to do it. There always are such men—nervy fellows who swing themselves into the saddle when their commander lifts his hand, and ride a mad race, with Death at the horse's flank every mile of the way. They are the unknown heroes of every war.

*"It was with a full realization of the dangers confronting him that Will cantered away from the Union lines, his borrowed uniform under his arm."**

There was another spy at work between the lines during Price's raid. It was Wild Bill Hickok. Cody told how he encountered his old pard one day when he rode up to a Missouri farmhouse. There was Bill, disguised as a southern officer, eating bread and milk.

"'Billy, my boy,' said he, 'I am mighty glad to see you. I haven't seen or heard of you since we got busted on that St. Louis horse race.'

"'What are you doing here?' I asked.

"'I am a scout under General McNiel. For the last few days I have been with General Marmaduke's division of Price's army, in disguise as a Southern officer from Texas, as you see me now,' said he.

"'That's exactly the kind of business that I am out on to-day,' said I; 'and I want to get some information concerning Price's movements.'

"'I'll give you all that I have,' and he then went on

*The Adjutant-General states, from the records, "Private Cody was apparently continuously with his company until January 23, 1865, when he was detached for duty in a hospital at Pilot Knob, Missouri." Thereafter he served as orderly and was not again in the field. The only time he could have been a spy would have been during the period in which the records shows him as "continuously with his company."

and told me all that he knew regarding Price's intentions, and the number and condition of his men. . . . He finally took out a package, which he had concealed about his person, and handing it to me he said:—

“ ‘Here are some letters which I want you to give to General McNiel.’ ”

On another occasion Cody was given water and food by a Confederate family, a “fine and intellectual looking lady and her two daughters.” To reward their hospitality he stayed and drove off looters when the Union army marched by. The young women were entertaining him when their father and brothers came in and were about to shoot him as a hated Yank. But the girls cried: “Father! Boys! Lower your guns! You must not shoot this man.” Having heard the story of how the Yank had saved them from pillage, the old man extended his hand and said: “I would not harm a hair of your head for the world; but it is best that you stay here no longer, as your command is some distance in advance now, and you might be cut off by bushwhackers before reaching it.”

These two tales cover what Cody did in the war, by his own original account. In the last years of his life, however, he was lending his name to such passages as the following:

“Before I had traveled five miles I had been pointed out to the entire command, and cheers greeted me on every side.”

“ ‘My boy’, said the general, ‘you may be too good-hearted for a soldier, but you have done just what I would have done.’ ”

“ ‘Young man’, said the general, when I stood before

him, 'you were recommended to me as an Indian fighter. What were you doing behind that tree?'

" 'That is the way we have to fight Indians, sir,' I said. 'We get behind anything that offers protection.' It was twelve years later that I convinced General Smith that my theory of Indian fighting was correct."

Such was the influence upon him of forty years in the inky clutches of the romancers. Ned Buntline began it. A veteran and an ardent patriot himself, Buntline could hardly have been expected to resist the temptation to make his Buffalo Bill a hero in the great war as well as in the Indian campaigns. He even assured his readers solemnly that his incidents were historically accurate, thus: *"In a story founded entirely on fact, with real characters for its actors, it is impossible to avoid some al-lusion, descriptively, to the past."*

"So, within two weeks after he left St. Louis, the hero of this story, with his company of scouts, held the advance of the great army which was destined to play such a conspicuous part in the long contested and fearful battle of Pea Ridge. . . ."

"Buffalo Bill, riding up from a distant point where he and his men had been hotly engaged since daylight, saw what havoc the batteries were making—saw, too, that the headquarters flags of the opposite army were on the hill by the batteries."

" 'Boys,' he cried, 'I'm going to stop this butchery. Those guns must be taken or silenced, or we're a whipped crowd.' . . ."

"His eagle eye had seen what was needed, and now, rising in his stirrups, he shook his long rifle in the air and shouted:

" 'CHARGE!'

"Merciful Heaven what a sight! Not fifty men of them all—yet like one swift cloud in a mottled sky, driving fiend-like before a gale, on—on they dashed!"

"No bugle note—no wild yell—but on—on to kill and to be killed! . . ."

"Talk not to me of the Light Brigade, famed at Balaklava—talk not to me of Lodi or Austerlitz. On a hundred fields in this, our dear native land, have charges been made and battles fought which were as far beyond them as light is superior to darkness."

"On—into and over the lines—through and through a sheet of fire blazing from their revolvers, and then the clubbed rifle crashing down sabre guard and parrying arm—crashing in skulls and felling stalwart forms, on with their trained horses they swept—those heroic scouts!"

Prentiss Ingraham, in his Buffalo Bill novels, contributed many an anecdote such as this:

"With a larger force, and perhaps a better knowledge of the country, for it was their home, the Confederate Ranger Scouts soon drove the boys in blue into a corner, and their gallant young leader was seen to fall. But instantly there dashed to his side the daring plainsman, Buffalo Bill, who was raising him to his own saddle when a bullet brought the horse down. Then, being at the mercy of his foes, the buckskin scout, in frontier style, raised his hands above his head."

"'Hold! Let no man fire a shot!' came in a loud, stern voice from the Confederate officer, while Buffalo Bill called back:

"'I ask nothing for myself, pard, only for Lieutenant Arthur, who is badly wounded, I fear, but who can be

saved if you will allow me to ride to camp for a surgeon and an ambulance, and then, upon the honor of Buffalo Bill, I will return and give myself up to you as a prisoner.'

"These manly words were heard by all the Confederates; a cheer from them was the answer, while up to the scout in buckskin rode a horseman, who, dismounting, quickly said:

"'You say that it is Lieutenant Arthur, who is wounded?'

"'Yes, sir, he commands the Cavalry Scouts.'

"'Then mount my own horse and ride with all speed back to your lines for a surgeon and an ambulance, while I see to him. He is a West Point comrade of mine, and our lines are too far away to get aid from there.'

"'By the setting sun, pard, but you are a true man!' cried Buffalo Bill, and with a bound he was in the saddle of the Confederate officer and away at full speed."

As recently as 1926, a newspaper series entitled *True Adventures of Buffalo Bill*, by Courtney Ryley Cooper, recounted this anecdote of the battle of Pilot Knob:

"In the gathering of the dead after that conflict the Union forces found, with many others, three men who could be identified. Each had been shot cleanly. Each had been killed with one bullet, placed in a vital spot, indicating that the gun which had fired them had been truly aimed and with a definite object. And all these three men had played a responsible part in the stabbing of Isaac Cody and the consequent persecution which meant his death.

"Were they the result of Will Cody's aim? I asked the colonel that question one day. He shrugged his shoulders.

"'Well, now, Badlands,' he said, 'that was a long

time ago. Besides, the Civil War's been over for years, and forgotten. But, of course,' he added, 'that wasn't exactly war, now was it? and'—there had come a slight smile, 'I always was a good shot.' ”

One day when the opposing armies were drawn up in skirmish lines near Pilot Knob two men on horseback were seen to break suddenly from the Confederate ranks and dash toward the Union troops. Both sides fired. One of the riders fell dead, but one came through safely. It was Wild Bill, still clad as a Confederate, and bearing important information which led to a victory over Price. Cody, who saw this, said: “From this time on, Wild Bill and myself continued to scout together until Price's army was driven south of the Arkansas river and the pursuit abandoned.”

In the meantime, according to Buntline, Wild Bill had slain Jake “M'Kandlas” and the rest of his gang.

“Thunder, Bill,” said Cody, “you don't leave nothin' for me to do.” To his description of Wild Bill's fight—*“Like tigers mad for blood, with flashing, clashing knives, silent only that their breathing could be heard for rods, they sprang and leaped at each other, parrying and thrusting, until the last man of the crowd lay dead before the hero.”*—Buntline appended a foot-note, reading *“A historical fact.”* Fact it was indeed, except that the McCandles fight occurred several years earlier, resulted in the death of only three men, not eleven, and had nothing whatever to do with Bill Cody.

After October Cody saw no more fighting. “I was permitted to spend a time at military headquarters in St. Louis on detached service.”*

*The Adjutant-General's statement of this service is as follows: “He was by order of General Dodge detailed for special duty as orderly in St. Louis, at Headquarters, District of St. Louis, apparently for duty with

His duties as orderly were light enough to permit some social diversion. He met Louisa Frederici, and lost his heart to her. He was nineteen; she was twenty-two. The dawn of the romance was made rosy by his sister, thus: "He desired to establish an acquaintance with the young lady, but as none of his friends knew her, he found it impossible. At length a chance came. Her bridle-rein broke one morning; there was a runaway, a rescue, and then acquaintance was easy."

Louisa, however, seems to have forgotten that incident. Her recollection was that Will was introduced to her by her cousin, and that the first thing she did was to slap his face, through some slight misunderstanding.

Buntline made a better story of it: "*A mixed party, in which the colored trappings told that cavalry, artillery, and infantry men were all on a debauch together—swept along Fourth Street, singing Bacchanalian songs at the top of their voices.*

"*A young girl, not over sixteen, very, very beautiful, with great dreamy eyes, hair hanging in loose manes all over her white shoulders, drew back at the corner to let them pass. On her arm hung her satchel of books, for she was a schoolgirl.*

"*The eye of a great bearded sergeant of artillery fell upon her shrinking form. Excited with strong drink, he forgot his manhood, and shouted:*

"*'Halt, boys! Here's a girl that turns up her nose at a Union soldier.' . . .*

"*'Let me pass on, sir; I am going to school.'*

"*'You don't pass here until you prove you love Union soldiers by kissing every man of the party,' shouted the sergeant. 'That's the tune, isn't it boys?' . . .*

the Freedmen's Relief Society, on which duty he continued probably until about August 18."

"'Coward! I'll die before I submit to this insult,' cried the brave girl.

"The coarse wretch laughed, and bent his shaggy head down as he threw his rude arms about her slender waist.

"Wildly arose her shrill scream upon the air, as she dashed her small hands into his eyes, for the moment delaying his purpose.

"'Girl, mind what you're about, or this shall be the worse for you,' shouted the sergeant, hoarsely, and he raised her form in his arms as if she had been but a doll.

"But before he could again bend his hot, sensual face toward her pure lips, a horse and rider came rushing down the street with the speed of a winged bird.

"It was Buffalo Bill on his wild Powder Face, and he dashed into and over that crowd as if they were only bags of down in his way.

"With one blow of his clenched hand he dashed the bulky miscreant to the earth, with his other arm he encircled the waist of the lovely girl, and lifting her to his saddle-bow, gave the word 'on' to his noble horse, and dashed through and over the crowd before a hand could be raised to check him. . . .

"'Oh, sir, you are so brave and so good! I was frightened almost to death, for they would have killed me. I would have died before they should kiss me,' cried the lovely girl.

"'Dying would come cheap for a willing kiss from such lips, but the brute that would force it is too mean to die—he ought to be wedged in a swamp and fed on raw porcupine skins, shells thrown in. . . .'

Louisa's father was grateful.

"'Make my house your home while you are in town.'

"'I dare not, sir!' said Bill, and his voice trembled as he spoke.

"'Dare not? What is the reason?' asked the banker in astonishment.

"'If I see her any more, I shall love her, and love above my station would be madness and folly,' said Bill bluntly, and with that honor which was part of his nature.

"'Love her, man? Why, what if you do?' "

Courtship was interrupted by the close of the war. Almost immediately the victorious army turned its attention to subduing the Indians. General William T. Sherman and the Indian Commissioners went to Council Springs in the fall of 1865, to make a treaty with the Arapahoes and Comanches. After a three-day pow-wow, he continued on to Fort Leavenworth. General Sherman, in a testimonial letter to Cody dated in 1887, recalled that, "You guided me honestly and faithfully, in 1865-6, from Fort Riley to Kearney." After the press agents began to use this letter, the books began to include a neat anecdote. Sherman's party had lost its way, through the ignorance of an older guide. The youthful Cody, who was only a messenger, stepped into the breach and set them right. "My boy," said Sherman, "I am going to know you better," and promoted him to be chief guide. Early accounts of Cody's life made no mention of guiding Sherman. They stated only that he went home, to be mustered out at Leavenworth in November.

Having won from Louisa her consent to be his wife, he needed money on which to start married life. He turned to the work which he knew best—handling horses. He spent the winter in taking a string of horses to Fort Kearney, and as a stage-coach driver. His old boss, Bill Trotter, gave him a job on the division between Kearney and Plum Creek, where he passed daily the scene of his first Indian encounter.

He was a good driver. At the reins he was almost as impressive as he was in the saddle. A friend said once: "He is the only man I ever saw who can sit on a coach box and hit all four of his horses with one motion. No trout fisher ever cast a fly as gracefully as Colonel Cody can toss the beeswax into a refractory off-leader." He drove one of the famous Concord coaches, drawn by four fine grays, a gaily painted box hung on thorough-brace leather springs, with nine passengers inside when it was full, and the boot stuffed with mail-bags.

The railroad had almost reached Kearney, but the creaking, swaying stage-coaches were still carrying their thousands of passengers and their millions of letters. The drivers were a merry lot, good shots, skilful with the ribbons, inordinately proud of their decorated whips, musically inclined and fond of giving the passengers wild western thrills. Frank Root, who knew them all in those days, said: "While a number of them were farmers and ranchmen, others had had some experiences as mechanics and clerks, and a few had been employed in one way or another on some railroad. One had steered a boat on the 'raging canawl'; another had been a pilot on a Western river steamboat. Some were natural geniuses—'jacks of all trades.' Apparently there was nothing that delighted a good many of them so much as, when on the box, driving a wild, dashing team over a rough and crooked mountain road on a down grade. The rougher the trail and more dangerous, the more skill it required to handle the team and the better it appeared to suit them. It used to be a common remark—a sort of byword many years ago—that it took a good driver to run against every stone in the road, but the 'Overland' boys usually managed to get over the trail at a lively gait and knew just how to miss all of such obstructions. In turning such

curves and going at a breakneck speed around a precipitous embankment on the very edge of a dangerous-looking ledge of rocks, with a yawning abyss into which you could look hundreds of feet below, a fearless, care-for-nothing driver appeared in the height of his glory. The most of them seem to know no fear."

One of the old stage-drivers' songs runs:

*Pound 'em on the back, let the leaders go,
Never mind the weather so the wind don't blow.*

The wind blew that winter along the stage road, and the weather was cold. Kearney was a fairly lively place when the traffic was heavy, but jogging to Plum Creek was not very exciting for Cody. Helen reported two adventures which, in his own books, he seems to have overlooked. In one he saved the coach and its terrified passengers by firing from the box while careening at full speed and killing the chief of a band of pursuing Indians. In the other, he boldly and cleverly foiled a gang of outlaws who were about to rob the coach, which was carrying a large amount of money:

"'Will you oblige me by tying your friend's hands? Thank you. Now throw out your guns. That's all? All right. Let me see your hands.'

"When both outlaws had been securely trussed up and proven to be disarmed, the journey was resumed."

When he got home from this trip he found a letter from Louisa, urging him to "give up the wild life he was leading, return East, and find another calling."

Immediately he told the boss that he was quitting.

"'I don't like to let you go,' objected Trotter.

"'But,' said Will, 'I took the job only in order to save enough money to get married on.'

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~ BUFFALO BILL'S DEATH-DEAL; ~

OR,

The Wandering Jew of the West.

BY

Colonel Prentiss Ingraham.



BUFFALO BILL JOINS INTO THEIR MIST, HIS REVERSED RIFLES OUT DEATH ANGLES AT EVERY SHOT.

From the collection of Dr. Frank P. O'Brien

Cover of another Buffalo Bill novel

Headquarters Department of the Platte,

CHIEF QUARTERMASTER'S OFFICE,

Omaha, Nebraska, June 2^d 1869.

Kent, J. C. Morgan. 2^d Cav.

Acting Assist. Quartermaster

Fort M^c Pherson. Nebraska.

Sir,

As Maj Genl E. A. Carr. 5th Cav.
having applied for transportation for
the expedition ordered from Fort
M^c Pherson, you are respectfully
instructed to transfer, to the Quarter-
master of the expedition for the
Republican under General Carr. thirty
30, pack mules equipped, five 5 packers
mounted, material for hamples and
forage-sacks, with two civilian scouts
William Cody and Garry.

You will make requisition

Quartermaster's orders for the expedition which ended in the Battle of Summit Springs and the killing of Tall Bull. The importance of this document is that it shows that Cody was not an army officer at the time, but a civilian scout (see third line from the bottom)

WAR AND COURTSHIP

“‘In that case,’ said Trotter, ‘I have nothing to do but wish you joy.’”

He married Louisa Frederici at St. Louis on March 6, 1866, one week after his twentieth birthday.

CHAPTER VIII

WHEN A MAN'S MARRIED

THE plainsman who had taken a city girl for his bride promised her that he would settle down.

An hour after the wedding they were on a Missouri River boat steaming north to Leavenworth. It was a gay boat. The negro barber, a good fiddler, played for the dancing. But there were some Missouri excursionists aboard who kept aloof and looked askance at Cody. "They say you are one of the Kansas jay-hawkers and one of Jennison's house burners," said an acquaintance. Their mutterings worried his wife.

When the boat tied up at a landing the next morning to take on wood for the boiler, a gang of twenty mounted men rode out of the forest, firing. As the deck hands scrambled aboard and the captain hurried to cast off and swung the boat out into the river, the bushwhackers lined up on the bank, shouting, "Where is the black Abolition jay-hawker? Show him to us and we'll shoot him." Cody said that he learned later that the hostile excursionists had telegraphed ahead to their friends to come to the landing and kill him.* He boldly stalked into their midst with each hand resting on the butt of a revolver,—and that was all.

His wife's memory seems to have been of a pleasant journey, marred only by a quarrel at the dock between roustabouts and settlers, in which her husband was not involved. He said, however, that he was afraid she

*In some versions these attackers were of the famous band of Jesse James and the Younger brothers.

would think that she had married a desperado. At Kansas City he went ashore and telegraphed to his own friends at Leavenworth, asking them to arrange a genteel reception. Friends and family responded, sixty strong, reenforced by a serenading band which escorted the honeymooners to the home of his sister Eliza. "All this cheered up my wife."

She was further cheered up when he rented the little hotel which his mother had once kept, in Salt Creek Valley. As landlord of the Golden Rule House, his first act was one of characteristic generosity; he invited his two younger sisters to come and live there. His horde of friends followed.

Word went out along the trail that passed his tavern that Bill Cody was a genial host, not in the least stingy. Penniless wayfarers flocked to his bar and board. "Socially he was an irreproachable landlord," said his sister, "financially his shortcomings were deplorable." He said with pride that "people generally said I made a good landlord and knew how to run a hotel." His wife, looking over the books, was not so certain, and she hated the liquor he sold. When at the end of six months, he decided that it was "too tame employment for me," and sighed for the plains, she released him from his promise.

"I know the West, Lou," he told her. "I know every foot of it. And I've got to do my part. It isn't a very pretty place, now, but there'll be towns some day out here almost as big as St. Louis, and I've got to help make the road clear for them."

Thousands of men were working mightily to clear the road. Two lines of railway tracks were being spiked down on prairie soil—the Union Pacific along the Platte, and farther south, on the Smoky Hill River, the Kansas Pacific reaching toward Denver. An Atchison newspaper

said in October, "There will be no call for mule and ox trains on the great plains a twelvemonth hence." Ben Holladay, who had been running the Overland stages for five years, saw the end coming and sold out to Wells, Fargo.

Nevertheless, Cody thought he might prosper as a freighter. Closing the hotel, he borrowed enough money to get an outfit. On his first trip the wagon and horses were captured by Indians. His sister wrote: "Their owner barely escaped with his life. From a safe covert he watched the redskins plunge him into bankruptcy. It took him several years to recover, and he has often remarked that the responsibility of his first business venture on borrowed capital aged him prematurely."

Eluding the Indians he made his way on foot to Junction City, then at the end of the rails, a rip-roaring camp of tents and unpainted shanties, saloons and dance-houses, with games going on and guns going off at all hours. And in the thick of it was the man who never could stay away from such places, Wild Bill Hickok.

The reunion was a happy one. Wild Bill was chasing horse-thieves. At Fort Ellsworth there was need for more scouts, and he took his young friend along and got him a job. Meanwhile Mrs. Cody, back in Leavenworth, supported herself by sewing.

The Indian crisis was coming at last. Just before the end of the Civil War, Governor Evans of Colorado had warned Chief Black Kettle: "The Great Father will not know what to do with all his soldiers, except to send them after the Indians on the plains." Evans had raised a thousand soldiers of his own, "raised to kill Indians and they must kill Indians." Late in 1864 these brave men under Colonel Chivington had surrounded a Cheyenne village at Sand Creek and massacred more than seventy

men, women and children. An interpreter made affidavit to the horror: "They were scalped, their brains knocked out; the men used their knives, ripped open women, clubbed little children, knocked them in the head with their guns, beat their brains out, mutilated their bodies in every sense of the word." White men did this bloody work.

Terrified, the southern tribes had made treaties which they kept faithfully for many months, even when the agents cheated them out of rations and supplies. Up in the Powder River Valley, however, between the Black Hills and the Big Horn Range, the Sioux were showing fight. The white invader was carving a new trail straight through their hunting-grounds. Jim Bridger guided the "damn paper collar soldiers" who marched north from Fort Laramie. Chief Red Cloud caught and slaughtered a party of eighty-one near Fort Philip Kearny. The country thrilled with new fear. "We must act with vindictive earnestness against the Sioux," General Sherman wrote to Grant, "even to their extermination, men, women and children."

The army was looking for trouble with the Cheyenne in Kansas and Colorado. General George A. Custer was sent out, General Sherman saying of him that he was "young, very brave, even to rashness, a good trait for a cavalry officer and ready and willing now to fight the Indians."

In the spring, to teach the savages an early lesson, General Hancock marched fourteen hundred troops from Fort Larned to Pawnee Fork and thoroughly destroyed the Cheyenne village from which the natives had fled at his approach. Coolly he said that he regarded their flight as a hostile move. After that, depredations began. Stage stations were burned and travel suspended. Said

Custer, "An Indian war with all its barbarities had been forced upon the people of the frontier."

The news had reached Cody that a daughter, Arta, had been born on December sixteenth, at Leavenworth. He did not go home, but continued scouting between Ellsworth and Fort Fletcher, finding little excitement but gaining experience.

One thing he was learning was the trail to notoriety, along which he saw his friend Wild Bill treading with careless grace. That brilliant reporter, Henry M. Stanley, passed through and interviewed Wild Bill for the *New York Herald*, in the series of dispatches which inspired James Gordon Bennett to send him to Africa to find the explorer Livingstone. George Ward Nichols visited Wild Bill, looked into the "eyes that have pointed the way to death to hundreds of men," and wrote an admiring article for *Harper's*. Custer wrote of Wild Bill as "the most famous scout on the plains" at this time, although his own favorite was Will Comstock, who rode and hunted and messed with him and whom he praised as "perfect in horsemanship, fearless in manner, and a gentleman by instinct." Among so many good scouts young Cody had not yet become distinguished, and Stanley and other reporters of the season did not discover him.

There was, according to Cody, one raid near Fort Hays in which the Indians killed five or six railroad workers. Cody guided the punitive expedition of negro cavalry, which was attacked by a hundred or more Indians, lost five killed and many wounded and retreated with alacrity, reaching the fort almost exhausted.

There is a pretty story of his first meeting with Custer. Cody was chosen to guide Custer and a small party to Ford Larned. Said the commandant, "Cody knows this part of the country like a book; he is up to all the Indian

games, and he is as full of resources as a nut is of meat." The mule on which Cody was mounted aroused Custer's disdain; he thought it could not go fast enough. After a good-humored all-day race, however, they rode into Larned with the mule in the lead, Custer's tired thoroughbred lagging and the rest of the escort nowhere.

" 'Cody,' laughed the general, 'that remarkable quadruped of yours looks equal to a return trip. Our horses are pretty well fagged out, but we have made a quick trip and a good one. You brought us cross country straight as the crow flies, and that's the sort of service I appreciate.' "

The voluminous letters which Custer was writing to his wife, reciting every amusing incident of each day, do not mention this ride to Larned.* Cody himself, however, said, "That was the beginning of my acquaintance with General Custer. He said he would like to have me accompany him as one of his scouts during the summer; and he added that whenever I was out of employment, if I would come to him he would find something for me to do."

But the young scout's mind was turning back toward his wife and the new baby in Leavenworth, and toward his old promise to settle down. While in this mood he fell in with William Rose, a contractor, who was grading ahead of the railroad. Rose had a glorious dream, one that was familiar on the prairie. A town should be built on the spot where the tracks were expected to cross the creek, a mile from Fort Hays. It looked like a big thing.

The real-estate firm of Rose and Cody was formed, an engineer was hired to stake out the site, and the town

*Custer's memoirs do not disclose that he met Cody in 1867. Mrs. Custer stated positively that Cody did not serve with her husband until later.

of Rome was founded. To start the boom, the promoters gave lots free to any who would take them. They reserved the corner lots for sale at fifty dollars each. Within thirty days there were two hundred houses going up, several stores, as many saloons and a hotel. "We had the world by the tail," said Cody. He wrote to his wife that he was worth two hundred and fifty thousand dollars. She and the baby came out to live with him in a back room of the store which Rose and Cody started to keep.

But railroads in pioneer country like to do the real-estate business themselves. Dr. W. E. Webb, land agent for the Kansas Pacific, arrived at Rome promptly. After fruitless negotiations, he started a new town a mile away, announcing that the car shops would be built there. By offering free transportation, Webb carted to the new site every last man of the lately settled citizens of Rome, their household goods and even their lumber. Within three days all that was left by the creek was the little store.

For the third time Cody found himself penniless. He had failed as a hotel-keeper, he had been wiped out as a freighter and he had been outwitted as a real-estate promoter. Doctor Webb was amiable enough to give Cody and Rose each a lot in his own town of Hays. But Mrs. Cody was discouraged. She never could become used to life on the plains and she craved the comforts of civilization. In particular she longed for a horse and buggy. Cody had only his saddle horse, Brigham, a fast hunter but a "poky looking plug." His wife took the baby and went off to her family in St. Louis.

Presumably Custer's offer of a job was still open. There was now plenty of Indian fighting to do. Stanley reported the war as "flagrant north and south, every day

outrages and atrocities." Custer had some hard fighting near the headwaters of the Republican River. Governor Crawford of Kansas issued a proclamation calling for eight companies of state cavalry to protect the railroad and the highways. More than three hundred and fifty Kansans enlisted, but not Cody.

His partner, Rose, still held the contract for grading road-bed, and as they still had hopes for the revival of Rome, they thought it best to stay and wait for something to turn up. "It was indeed hard for us who had been millionaires, to come down to the level of common railroad contractors—but we had to do it all the same."

The fleet Brigham was hitched to a scraper and his master toiled beside him in the summer sun, pushing a wheel-barrow—clearing the road for the march of empire.

CHAPTER IX

HOW BUFFALO BILL WON HIS TITLE

"HELL on wheels," was Samuel Bowles' term for the camp that jumped westward with the stretching of the transcontinental railway. A string of flat-cars would rattle to the end of the new-laid tracks and throw off a chaos of tents, shanties, store-fronts, house-walls, lumber, boxes, barrels, bottles, bar furniture and the other raw material of structures in which to sleep, eat, drink, dance and gamble. An eye-witness described the arrival of such a portable metropolis on the Union Pacific: "The guard jumped off his van, and seeing some friends on the platform, called out with a flourish, 'Gentlemen, here's Julesburg.'" The town had come; the fun could begin.

Quite as uproarious was the progress of the Kansas Pacific along the Smoky Hill. Frank Root well remembered a night he passed in the summer of 1867 at Ellsworth, while it was the rail-head. "It was a typical Western frontier town. Shooting scrapes were of frequent occurrence. 'Another man for breakfast this morning' was common talk on the streets and in a number of frequented resorts. . . . It was almost wholly a town of tents and small, rough, frame buildings, but one of the busiest little places I ever knew in the state. Everything appeared to be wild with excitement. There were about a hundred business houses in the town, many of them carrying on their trade in tents. All business appeared to be transacted on the high-pressure scale. It seemed as if nearly every other house in town

HOW BUFFALO BILL WON HIS TITLE

was a drinking place, while gambling-halls and dance-houses and other questionable resorts were uncommonly numerous. Firing off guns promiscuously, and crowds filled with the vilest of liquor and yelling like wild, drunken Indians, were sounds frequently heard on the streets at all hours in nearly every direction. To sleep was an impossibility until nearly daylight, when the drunken revelry had in a measure died away."

By autumn the track reached Hays and Wild Bill Hickok with it. They said that Wild Bill had seen the building of nearly every mile from Manhattan west. They were calling him "the Slade of western Kansas." A correspondent of the *St. Louis Republic* saw him christen the depot at Hays with one of his famous "double shots":

"Two men came out of a saloon and walked toward the newly built depot surrounded by a raised platform. Each man had a pistol drawn, when suddenly from a group of four or five 'crack! crack!' went two pistol shots, and Wild Bill stood on the edge of the platform with smoking, bone-handled revolvers in each hand, and the two men who had been approaching the platform were seen to totter, stumble forward, and fall. Death was instantaneous in each case, as if Jove had hurled a bolt at the men. A row over cards the night before caused the double death, and a double funeral as soon as the corpses could be prepared for interment."

The army of laborers, like any other army, lived off the country whenever it could. And the K. P. now had the advantage of building through country alive with buffalo meat, which was excellent eating. The firm of Goddard Brothers, having contracted to board the workmen, were looking about for a hunter. Wild Bill was offered the job but he was busy scouting and remem-

bered Cody, saying, "I can kill six buffalo with my revolver while he kills one with his rifle. But he can kill all that you will want. He is a fine boy and dependable." The Goddards looked up Cody and offered him five hundred dollars a month to hunt for them.

To dignify the transaction, Cody's publicity later had him say that being an army scout, he could not leave the service without permission of the military authorities:

"The subject was even discussed at headquarters in Washington and after considerable delay, evidence was presented that it would solve one of the main labor problems in the great work of constructing the great trans-continental railroad and facilitate matters greatly. Leave of absence for the purpose was given me, with the understanding that in case of an important outbreak I should resume the duties of my position. As roving Indians generally followed the herds of buffalo, I was really in a certain sense performing scout duty also."

No such leave of absence was required, for he was not in the army, and at that time was not even a scout. He was a civilian and a contractor. To the public who fondly pictured Cody's life as one constant round of scouting and slaughtering Indians, it was necessary thus to explain away the less romantic jobs of pushing a scraper and slaughtering buffalo for meat. From the longer view of history, it appears that his best contributions to the winning of the West were in the prosaic tasks which he shared with hundreds of other men—running a frontier hotel, driving freight, building towns, grading road-bed, killing buffalo.

The last was of supreme importance, not only because it supplied food to the workers, but because it was undermining the basis of Indian economy.

The migration of the buffalo was the great annual

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event. It began in the early spring with the first greening of the grass. General Richard Irving Dodge wrote: "It is almost impossible for a civilized being to realize the value to the plains Indian of the buffalo. It furnished him with home, food, clothing, bedding, horse equipment—almost everything. . . .

"Some years, as in 1871, the buffalo appeared to move northward in one immense column, oftentimes from twenty to fifty miles in width, and of unknown depth from front to rear. Other years the northward journey was made in several parallel columns moving at the same rate and with their numerous flankers covering a width of a hundred or more miles. . . .

"Old plainsmen and the Indians aver that the buffalo never return south; that each year's herd was composed of animals which had never made the journey before, and would never make it again. All admit the northern migration, that being too pronounced for any one to dispute, but refuse to admit the southern migration. . . . Every plains Indian firmly believed that the buffalo were produced in countless numbers in a country under ground; that every spring the surplus swarmed, like bees from a hive, out of the immense cave-like opening in the region of the great Llano Estacado, or staked plain of Texas. In 1879 Stone Calf, a celebrated chief, assured me that he knew exactly where the calves were, though he had never seen them; that the good God had provided this means for the constant supply of food for the Indian, and however recklessly the white men might slaughter, they could never exterminate them. When last I saw him, the old man was beginning to waver in this belief, and feared that the 'Bad God' had shut the entrances, and that his tribe must starve."

Hostility to the railroad was grounded in the Indians'

knowledge that it was bringing the doom of the buffalo. Their hatred of the hunters and construction gangs made Cody's new job quite as dangerous as if he had joined Custer, in active warfare. Congress had appointed a peace commission to treat with the tribes, and this commission reported the situation: "Companies of workmen on the railroads, at points hundreds of miles from each other, would be attacked on the same day, perhaps in the same hour. Overland mail coaches could not be run without military escort, and railroad and mail stations unguarded by soldiery were in perpetual danger. All safe transit across the plains had ceased."

In August a grading party working twenty miles east of Hays was attacked and seven men were killed. Six weeks later there were more attacks west of Hays. The tribes served notice that the tracks must not go farther, else they would make war to the knife. The reply of the government was to send out more troops, and to put General Phil Sheridan in command. Several times the railroad workers threatened to quit because of the hazards.

More especially, however, they were concerned about their hungry stomachs. There were twelve hundred of them, and each hunter must bring in twelve buffalo a day—twenty-four hind-quarters and twelve humps, with the tongues as choice morsels. The hunters' daily routine was to ride out five or ten miles, followed in a wagon by the butcher, who would cut up the meat and haul it into camp.

Much of Cody's success in killing buffalo was due to the systematic way in which he went about it. Some artists drew pictures of him galloping after a herd and firing from behind. That kind of shooting did not get buffalo. You had to get alongside and shoot downward

to the heart. The close riding, abreast of the racing prey, was what made the hunt dangerous, and increased the danger because the best method was to get the leaders first. Some hunters would come up until they could shoot the nearest animal, and then chase the herd again. "My own tactics," Cody said, "were different. I rode to the head of the herd, pressed the leaders hard toward the left, and soon got the drove to circling round and round, killing those who tried to break off in straight line." Thus he was able to make his kill in the shortest time and to drop it all within a narrow area. Such efficiency was much appreciated by Scotty, his butcher.

Cody used a needle-gun, a breech-loading 50-caliber Springfield, which he called Lucretia Borgia. His greatest aid, however, was his horse, Brigham, whose fame as a buffalo hunter became almost as great as his master's. Cody got him from a Ute Indian and named him after the patron saint of Utah. "The best horse I ever saw for buffalo chasing," said Cody. "It is a fact that Brigham would stop if a buffalo did not fall at the first fire, so as to give me a second chance, but if I did not kill the buffalo then, he would go on as if to say 'You are no good and I will not fool away my time by giving you more than two shots.'"

Within seventeen months Cody killed, by his own count, 4280 buffalo. A reliable purveyor as well as a good fellow, he became highly popular with the workmen, one of whom is said to have made a jingle that fixed his famous nickname upon him:

*Buffalo Bill, Buffalo Bill,
Never missed and never will;
Always aims and shoots to kill
And the company pays his buffalo bill.*

Nearly thirty years later, after the name had rocked the arena in every capital in Europe and America, a rival claimant was brought forward as the original possessor of the title. He was William Matthewson of Wichita. It was said that in 1860, the year of the great drought, when grasshoppers darkened the Kansas skies and fell on the crops as thickly as a blizzard, Matthewson had gone out to kill buffalo, sending back wagon-trains of meat to feed the starving settlers. And in their gratitude they dubbed him Buffalo Bill.

"How did William Cody happen to call himself Buffalo Bill?" an interviewer asked Matthewson.

"Well," he replied, "you see Cody worked for me when he was a young fellow. I reckon he had begun to read Indian stories and see how much was to be made by that kind of a reputation, and he was always fond of talk and show. I never was any hand to wear my hair long and go swaggering around the country blowing about what I had done. Cody knows he had no real right to the name, but if he wants to show off as a dime novel hero, I have no objection."

This querulous outburst shocked and grieved the public of 1894. Reporters hurried to quiz Cody about Matthewson. He replied: "I never laid eyes on him and of course never worked for him. But this is the first intimation that I have ever had that any reputable person other than myself has ever claimed the title of Buffalo Bill. A few years ago there were as many claimants for my name as there were wild yellow flowers that gave their name to the State. It reminds me of a portion of a sonnet finishing:

*But as fondly loves on to the close,
As the sunflower gives to his God as he sets
The same look he gave as he rose.*

The aptness of the quotation was not made clear by the interviewer.

Considering that in the 'sixties the plains were black with fifteen million buffalo, and that thousands of men were killing them, it was not strange that many a nickname was based on the magic word. There was Buffalo Jones, there was Buffalo Chips, and there were other Buffalo Bills. But Cody seems to have won the title fairly.

Soon after his buffalo hunting began, according to John Burke, the great Kit Carson himself stopped off at Hays especially to make the acquaintance of Cody, and spent several days as his guest—"so justly celebrated had Buffalo Bill now become."

Undeniable contemporary evidence that Cody was already celebrated, at least locally, is found in the following, which appeared in the *St. Louis Democrat* of February 17, 1868:

At Hays City—says the *Tribune* of the 14th instant—considerable anxiety exists in regard to the safety of a party of citizens who were out buffalo hunting. There were ten in all, among whom were George and Henry Field, brothers of Mr. Samuel Field of Lawrence, and Mr. Parks, the traveling correspondent of the *Journal*, all under the direction of *Cody the noted guide*. They left Hays twelve days since and were to return on the 7th, but have not been heard of.

This obscure paragraph is highly important. It is probably the earliest reference to Cody in any large newspaper. It proves that even before his twenty-second birthday and two years before the dime novelist took him up, he was "the noted guide." It also sug-

gests that he was not yet generally known as "Buffalo Bill." An item in a Topeka newspaper two months later, reporting that Wild Bill and Cody had delivered some thieves to the local calaboose, referred to Wild Bill as "Deputy U. S. Marshal" and to Cody as a "Government detective."

We have found no record of the nickname earlier than Ned Buntline's stories which were begun in 1869. There is nothing but Matthewson's feeble protest to invalidate the title, and it is fitting that it should have belonged to Cody, for he was beyond question a great hunter.

He fed his customers well. The hides he brought in became overcoats for the soldiers and shaggy robes that warmed sleighs and pungs in a hundred New England towns. The great heads of his victims were mounted and sent throughout the country for display in stations and hotels, where some of them hung for years, excellent advertising not only for the railroad but also for Buffalo Bill.

With five hundred dollars a month Cody was at last able to live well at Hays, to send for his wife again, and to buy her the buggy she wanted. But one day when they were out riding in the buggy she had an Indian scare. She recalled how, as they drove furiously to escape, her husband held his revolver to her head, determined to kill her rather than let the Indians get her. The shock of this was so great that upon the advice of a physician she returned once more to St. Louis.

For the most part the Indians were sullenly quiet. In late October two hundred chiefs of the Kiowa, Comanche, Apache, Cheyenne and Arapahoe had met with the peace commissioners at Medicine Lodge. They had signed treaties, yielding once again to the greedy demands

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of the white man. A generation earlier, in giving them all the trans-Missouri land for their own, President Jackson had said, "The pledge of the United States has been given by Congress that the country destined for the residence of this people shall be forever 'secured and guaranteed to them.' . . . No political communities can be formed in that extensive region. . . . A barrier has thus been raised for their protection against the encroachments of our citizens."

Ever since then they had been moved out of one reserve after another. Now the southern tribes ceded all their rights in the panhandle areas and agreed to migrate south to a new reserve, more desolate still. There was little water and little game. Arms and ammunition which had been promised were not delivered, and the charity money also promised was delayed by Congress.

Cody's own stories tell of two occasions on which the Indians interrupted his hunting. One day in the spring he was chased by a band of thirty. Brigham, even when tired, was a better horse than any the redskins had. Time after time Cody stopped, wheeled and fired at his pursuers, killing one of their horses but hitting none of the riders. At last he met cavalrymen coming out to the rescue, the chase was reversed, and eight Indians were killed.

Brigham, besides all his merits, seems to have borne a charmed life, for he was safe in the corral on the only day when Cody's mount was killed. Thirty warriors—the usual number in these stories—came out of the head of a ravine and made for Cody and Scotty who were returning to camp with a wagon full of meat. Being mounted on a good horse owned by his employers, Cody could have run for it, but Scotty had only the wagon

drawn by a pair of mules and could not be deserted. The two men jumped down, unhitched the mules and tied them and the horse to the wagon. They heaped the buffalo hams round the wheels and entrenched themselves. Having several extra revolvers and plenty of ammunition, they held off the attack. Both mules and the horse were killed by Indian bullets, but the breast-work of flesh protected the men. At last Cody was able to crawl out and set fire to the prairie grass on the windward side of the wagon. Thick smoke rolled up. This was a prearranged signal to the soldiers who were constantly on the watch at the railroad. A troop of cavalry came galloping out and scared the Indians off.

"When the soldiers came up we had the satisfaction of showing them five '*good*' Indians—that is, dead ones. Two hours later we pulled into camp with our load of meat, which was found to be all right except that it had a few bullets and arrows sticking in it."

One of the hunter's best tricks was to bring meat into camp on the hoof. Cody described this feat as he performed it later, when he was doing quartermaster work for an army expedition. The colonel ordered him out to kill some meat.

"All right, Colonel, send along a wagon or two to bring in the meat."

The colonel replied, "I'm not in the habit of sending out my wagons until I know that there is something to be hauled in; kill your buffaloes first and then I'll send out the wagons,"

Cody obeyed, and shortly afterward the wagons had to be sent. The next day he did not ask for wagons. He rode out until he found a herd. "I managed to get seven of them headed straight for the encampment, and

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instead of shooting them just then, I ran them at full speed right into camp, and then killed them all, one after the other in rapid succession." Angrily the colonel wanted to know why Cody had not made his kill on the prairie. "I didn't care about asking for any wagons this time, Colonel," retorted the hunter, "so I thought I would make the buffaloes furnish their own transportation."

Even while he was still slaughtering for the railroad gang his renown among the army officers at Fort Hays grew so great that a buffalo-killing contest was arranged, in which he was matched against Billy Comstock, who was Custer's favorite guide. Officers at Fort Wallace thought Comstock had more right than Cody to the title of Buffalo Bill, and raised their share of a purse of five hundred dollars. Posters were put up at the stations along the new railroad, and Cody said that an excursion train from St. Louis brought more than a hundred spectators, including his wife. In wagons and on horseback they rode to the hunting ground, twenty miles east of Sheridan, where buffalo were plentiful and the prairie was level enough so that all could see the chase.

Cody rode Brigham and used his needle-gun. Comstock carried a Henry rifle, which shot faster but did not hit so hard. When a herd was located, the two men rode into it together, followed by a mounted referee. The herd split, Comstock chasing one bunch and Cody the other. The onlookers followed as best they could.

Using his best tactics, Cody crowded the leaders. "On this morning," he said, "the buffaloes were very accommodating, and I soon had them running in a beautiful circle, when I dropped them thick and fast, until I had killed thirty-eight, which finished my run. Com-

stock banded at the rear buffalo in his herd, killed him, and then followed the rest across the country, always aiming at the rear one." He killed twenty-three, scattering them over three miles of prairie, while Cody's victims lay close together. "I had nursed my buffaloes, as a billiard-player does the balls when he makes a big run."

Time was called until the excursionists caught up and served champagne. This, said Cody, "proved a good drink on a Kansas prairie, and a buffalo hunter was a good man to get away with it. . . . In a short time we were a very merry crowd."

A fresh herd was sighted, this time cows and calves, who were faster than the bulls. Again Cody was the winner; again the champagne was broached. Somewhat aroused by the beverage, Cody announced that he would show that he could kill buffalo while riding bareback. Removing saddle and bridle, and guiding Brigham only by his voice and the touch of his hand, he dashed into another herd and killed thirteen more. To make a spectacular finish he drove the last buffalo straight toward the wagons in which the admiring women were seated. This gave them a splendid fright, but he sent the animal crashing to the turf within fifty yards of them.

His score for the day was sixty-nine animals against forty-six for Comstock. The referees declared Cody winner of the prize money, and, by the same decision, as he claimed, finally confirmed his right to be known as Buffalo Bill.

A few months later Comstock was permanently removed from competition for the title. He and another scout, Sharpe Grover, were paying a friendly visit at an Indian village near Big Spring. Some of the young braves took a fancy to Comstock's white-handled revol-

ver, and when the scouts rode away, followed and attacked them. Grover escaped, thanks to a speedy horse, but Comstock was killed and scalped. "A fearless scout and hunter," Cody generously said of him, "a good shot and a good fellow."

CHAPTER X

SCOUTING FOR SHERIDAN AND CARR

THE buffalo hunter lost his job when construction on the Kansas Pacific was suspended and there was no more demand for meat. But there was plenty of work around the army posts, for General Sheridan was getting ready for hostilities. Cody raffled off Brigham, took his wife and baby to Leavenworth and returned to Fort Larned, where he went to work for the quartermaster. He was twenty-two, free and ripe for adventure. He did not have long to wait.

Congress had finally appropriated the money under the Medicine Lodge treaties, and these funds provided the Indians not only with rations but with guns and powder. Little Raven and other chiefs having pledged themselves that the arms would be used only to hunt game, the agent at Larned gave out hundreds of rifles and pistols, when plenty of powder, lead and caps. "They were delighted at receiving the goods," he reported, "particularly the arms and ammunition, and never before had I known them to be better satisfied and express themselves as being so well contented."

Three days later ten settlers were killed in raids along the Republican and Saline Rivers. Before the end of August Sheridan reported that the Indians had killed twenty citizens of Kansas and wounded many more, and directed their forcible removal to the reservations.

It was the issue of rifles which, as Frederic L. Paxson says, transformed the Indian from a savage warrior into "the finest natural soldier in the world." The blun-

der had been made by the civilian Indian office; it gave new force to the argument of the army officers that there must be military control. General Sherman wrote in a letter to his brother: "We have now selected and provided reservations for all, off the great roads. All who cling to their old hunting grounds are hostile and will remain so till killed off. . . . The country is so large, and the advantage of the Indians so great, that we cannot make a single war and end it. From the nature of things we must take chances and clean out Indians as we encounter them."

Six thousand warriors were off the reservations, while Sheridan had only twenty-six hundred soldiers. To reinforce the federal troops, the state of Kansas raised five companies of cavalry among its own citizens, and Sheridan was authorized to recruit a company of scouts. Cody did not join either of these fighting bodies. It is particularly curious that he was not one of the fifty scouts who served under Colonel Sandy Forsyth, for they were the choice spirits of the frontier, hardy men, good riders and crack shots all, picked for dangerous duty. Twenty of them were taken from Fort Hays and thirty from Fort Harker. Later press agents must have cursed the fate that kept Buffalo Bill off that roster. For the scouts put up one of the most glorious fights in the history of the plains.

Ready within five days, they rode out with no supply train except four mules who packed four thousand extra rounds of ammunition and a little food and medicine. Sharpe Grover was the guide. The orders were to go after the "dog soldiers," as the Cheyenne were called. They went up into the Republican River country where, on September seventeenth, they were trapped by nine hundred Indians under Chief Roman Nose.

Taking refuge on a little island, they dug themselves in, using their bowie-knives and tin plates in lieu of shovels. Again and again the Indians charged, to be driven back by hot and accurate fire. Pete Trudeau and Jack Stilwell slipped out in the darkness to bring relief from Fort Wallace, a hundred and ten miles away. Days passed, with almost constant attacks. Lieutenant Beecher was killed. Forsyth was struck three times, but continued to command. Twenty-three of the fifty-one were killed or seriously wounded. The scant rations exhausted, the survivors lived on horse-flesh. Finally they killed Chief Roman Nose himself with a volley of bullets, and they held their position until the ninth day, when a troop of cavalry arrived and rescued them.

That Cody did not belong to this company of heroes may be explained by the fact that just before it was raised he had done extraordinary service for General Sheridan and in consequence was held at Fort Hays for use as a guide. Sheridan's opinion of the average scout was not so high as that held by Custer and others. In his autobiography, Sheridan said: "In those days the railroad town of Hays City was filled with so-called 'Indian scouts,' whose common boast was of having slain scores of redskins, but the real scout—that is, a guide and trailer knowing the habits of the Indians—was very scarce, and it was hard to find anybody familiar with the country south of the Arkansas, where the campaign was to be made. Still, about Hays City and the various military posts there was some good material to select from, and we managed to employ several men, who, from their experience on the plains in various capacities, or from natural instinct and aptitude, soon became excellent guides and courageous and valuable scouts, some

of them indeed, gaining much distinction. Mr. William F. Cody ('Buffalo Bill'), whose renown has since become world-wide, was one of the men thus selected."

A great feat of dispatch-riding won Sheridan's admiration for Cody. Near Fort Larned there were several hundred lodges of Kiowas and Comanches, under the notorious chief Satanta, a stocky, bullet-headed, hard-drinking Indian, known as "the orator of the plains." Satanta wore the uniform of a major-general which had been given to him by General Hancock, and traveled about with great dignity in an ambulance drawn by a span of mules. In his lodge he had a carpet on which to receive white guests, tables made of wide boards studded with brass tacks, and a treasured French horn on which he blew blasts to summon his family to meals. The soldiers never trusted him and they dreaded his power, particularly at this time when his people were hungry and grumbling because their promised beef cattle had not arrived.

One August afternoon Cody was returning alone to Larned, at the end of a sixty-mile scout. Forty Indians jumped him at Pawnee Rock. Stunned by a blow from a tomahawk, he was led captive before Satanta. By an ingenious lie he persuaded the chief to let him go, but when he put the spurs to his mule ten of the younger braves gave chase. Then began the first stage of one of the most remarkable rides in the records of the plains.

Two miles from the post the fugitive fortunately met Denver Jim and a few soldiers. Making a stand in ambush, they killed and scalped two of the Indians. Gaining the fort in safety, Cody learned that there was trouble afoot.

Some one had secretly sold Satanta whisky. The

Indians had killed half a dozen white wood choppers. It was evident that the whole tribe was getting ready to decamp, perhaps to go on the war-path. Word must be carried at once to Sheridan at Fort Hays.

None of the scouts cared much about risking that sixty-five miles, every mile of it alive with hostiles. Dick Curtis, the chief of scouts, put it up to Cody, who made an evasive answer, "for," as he said, "I did not care to volunteer after my long day's ride."

Curtis persisted, and finally Cody said, "I'll go provided I am furnished with a good horse. I am tired of being chased on a government mule by Indians."

In solid darkness he rode out. He had only slight mishaps. Once his horse stepped into a prairie-dog hole and threw him. Once he was chased by Indians but escaped by riding up a creek bottom. At dawn he reached Sheridan's headquarters.

This was the first meeting of the two men who became fast friends. Sheridan wrote in his autobiography that Cody "was first brought to my notice by distinguishing himself in bringing me an important dispatch from Fort Larned to Fort Hays." The Buffalo Bill publicity, however, made a better story of it by saying that the general already knew him and called out "Hello, Cody, is that you?" and invited him to breakfast.

In his *True Tales* Cody's account of this meeting is prefaced by a three-page description of a western blizzard: "Fine snow blown in the face succeeds in a very few minutes in blinding the one caught in it, and he is only able to struggle forward, impotent to aid himself, except by locomotion, until either guided by instinct or accident he stumbles into safety, or goes down in utter physical exhaustion to despair, sleep and, perhaps, eternal oblivion. . . . It was in one of these blizzards that

the meeting between General Phil Sheridan and myself occurred."

This is one of the touches which must be credited to the geniuses who wrote Cody's books for him; his own earlier accounts as well as Sheridan's record show that this was August and there was no blizzard. There was little excuse for elaborating the exploit, which was sufficiently hard and dangerous, even in midsummer. For the ride to Hays was only the first leg. Orders had to go to Fort Dodge, ninety-five miles south. According to Sheridan: "This too being a particularly dangerous route—several couriers having been killed on it—it was impossible to get one of the various 'Petes,' 'Jacks,' or 'Jims' hanging around Hays City to take my communication. Cody, learning of the strait I was in, manfully came to the rescue, and proposed to make the trip to Dodge, though he had just finished his long and perilous ride from Larned. I gratefully accepted his offer, and after four or five hours' rest he mounted a fresh horse and hastened on his journey, halting but once to rest on the way, and then only for an hour, the stop being made at Coon Creek, where he got another mount from a troop of cavalry. At Dodge he took six hours' sleep, and then continued on to his own post—Fort Larned—with more dispatches. After resting twelve hours at Larned, he was again in the saddle with tidings for me at Fort Hays, General Hazen sending him this time, with word that the villages had fled to the south of the Arkansas."

The sense of humor which sometimes caused Cody to make light of his own best performances was embarrassing to his hard-working press agents. In days before they had quite tamed him, he would tell that the reason he volunteered to carry the orders to Fort Dodge

was that a reward of several hundred dollars was offered, and he needed the money. As for going on to Larned, that was his home post and "I wanted to go there anyway." And of the final stage he said, "I was feeling quite elated over my big ride; and seeing that I was getting the best of the other scouts in regard to making a record, I volunteered to carry General Hazen's dispatch to Fort Hays."

The big adventure of the three days, as he liked to tell it, was not with Indians but with a mule.

At Fort Dodge the commanding officer had said, "I am sorry to say that we haven't a decent horse here, but we have a reliable and honest government mule, if that will do you."

"Trot out your mule," said Cody, "that's good enough for me. I am ready at any time, sir."

After thirty miles the rider dismounted to drink from a creek, and the mule jerked loose and trotted off toward their destination, Cody following on foot.

"Mile after mile I kept on after that mule, and every once in a while I indulged in strong language respecting the whole mule fraternity. From Coon Creek to Fort Larned it was thirty-five miles. . . . Just as day was beginning to break, we—that is the mule and myself—found ourselves on a hill looking down into the valley of the Pawnee Fork, in which Fort Larned was located, only four miles away; and when the morning gun belched forth we were within half a mile of the post.

"'Now,' said I, 'Mr. Mule, it is my turn,' and raising my gun to my shoulder, in dead earnest this time, I blazed away, hitting the animal in the hip. Throwing a second cartridge into the gun, I let him have another shot, and I continued to pour the lead into him until I had him completely laid out. . . . He was, without

doubt, the toughest and meanest mule I ever saw, and he died hard. . . . Taking the saddle and bridle from the dead body, I proceeded into the post and delivered the dispatches."

Counting this thirty-five miles on foot, Cody had covered about three hundred and fifty miles in less than sixty hours. General Sheridan wrote: "Such an exhibition of endurance and courage was more than enough to convince me that his services would be extremely valuable in the campaign, so I retained him at Fort Hays till the battalion of the Fifth Cavalry arrived, and then made him chief of scouts for that regiment."

When this passage from Sheridan's own book was quoted for publicity purposes, the press agents revised it in several respects. They made the testimonial even more generous by inserting the following sentence which does not appear in Sheridan's text: "*He had lived from boyhood on the plains and passed every experience; herder, hunter, pony express rider, stage driver, wagon master in the quartermaster's department, and scout of the army.*" Where Sheridan, in describing the record journey, had said that Cody "took six hours sleep," they changed the phrase to "*some* sleep," and from the next sentence, where Sheridan had said, "after resting twelve hours at Larned, he was again in the saddle," they struck out the words "twelve hours." The most significant change, however, was the omission of the three final words of the passage. Sheridan had said that he made Cody "chief of scouts for that regiment—the Fifth Cavalry. By capitalizing "CHIEF OF SCOUTS" and dropping out the qualifying words "for that regiment," the publicity made Sheridan seem to say that he had made Cody chief of scouts for the entire western army.

As years passed, this misquotation became the basis for the much-advertised title "Chief of the United States Army Scouts" which in the public mind lifted Buffalo Bill above all his rivals on the plains. Cody himself came to say: "I was chief of scouts in the United States Army under General Phil Sheridan. I was receiving the pay of colonel in the regular army." Mrs. Cody's book later added a further touch by saying that "Will had the rank of Colonel." He probably did get as much pay as a colonel, for a civilian scout could command more than the army scale during his occasional employment.*

"Chief of scouts" he was, but only for the Fifth Cavalry, which came out in September, 1868. This was a grand aggregation of seasoned fighting men, led brilliantly by General E. A. Carr. Said Cody, "It was a beautiful command and when strung out on the prairie with a train of seventy-five six-mule-wagons, ambulances and pack-mules, I felt very proud of my position as guide and chief of scouts of such a warlike expedition."

Angered by the assault on Forsyth, Sheridan gave the Fifth only two days' rest at Fort Hays before sending it out to punish the dog soldiers. At about the same time, General Sherman came back from another fruitless meeting of the Peace Commission to announce: "The only question to us is whether we shall allow the progress of our western settlements to be checked, and leave the Indians free to pursue their bloody career, or accept their war and fight them. We accept the war and hereby resolve to make it final."

The campaign opened with minor skirmishes and one battle on Beaver Creek, where six hundred Indians were

*Nearly twenty years later he received an honorary commission in the Nebraska National Guard, which gave him the rightful use of the title "Colonel."



Ned Buntline, Buffalo Bill and Texas Jack, in the costumes which they wore in their first stage appearance in "Scouts of the Prairie" in 1872



Cody in his fringed buckskins, at the time when he guided Grand Duke
Alexis in a buffalo hunt

engaged and several killed on each side. After this the main body was driven north across the Platte. General Carr soon found that he could place great confidence in Cody's knowledge of the country, and became very fond of him.

"He was the best white trailer I ever saw," Carr said. "On my first expedition we soon learned to understand one another. He saw that I knew the direction I wanted to go and I saw that he knew how to take me there. He was treated by the officers as one of themselves." At another time Carr wrote: "He was very modest and unassuming. He is a natural gentleman in his manners, as well as in character, and has none of the roughness of the typical frontiersman. He can take his own part when required, but I have never heard of his using a knife or pistol, or engaging in a quarrel when it could be avoided. His personal strength and activity are very great, and his temper and disposition are so good that no one has reason to quarrel with him.

"His eyesight is better than a good field-glass; he is the best trailer I ever heard of, and also the best judge of the 'lay of the country'—that is, he is able to tell what kind of country is ahead, so as to know how to act. He is a perfect judge of distance, and always ready to tell correctly how many miles it is to water, or to any place, or how many miles have been marched.

"Mr. Cody seemed never to tire and was always ready to go, in the darkest night or the worst weather, and usually volunteered, knowing what the emergency required. His trailing, when following Indians, or looking for stray animals or for game, is simply wonderful. He is a most extraordinary hunter.

"In a fight, Mr. Cody is never noisy, obstreperous, or excited. In fact, I never hardly noticed him in a fight,

unless I happened to want him, or he had something to report, when he was always in the right place, and his information was always valuable and reliable."

It was by efficient guiding, not by actual fighting, that Cody won praise in this first campaign, and he himself made no boast of valiant deeds. He even confessed to one failure in marksmanship, perhaps the only recorded instance of the kind. He had been riding ahead of the command to find a crossing on Beaver Creek. "Just as I turned a bend of the creek, 'Bang!' went a shot, and down went my horse—myself with him. I disentangled myself, and jumped behind the dead body. Looking in the direction whence the shot had come I saw two Indians, and at once turned my gun loose on them, but in the excitement of the moment I missed my aim." After an exchange of more shots, the advance guard came up and rescued him.

There was another day on which fifty Indians attacked a small hunting party, of which Cody was a member. "We had a severe fight for at least an hour, when we succeeded in driving the enemy. They lost four of their warriors, and probably concluded that we were a hard crowd. I had some excellent marksmen with me, and they did some fine work, sending the bullets thick and fast where they would do the most good."

These modest adventures did not satisfy the dime novelists, and one of Prentiss Ingraham's bloodiest inventions seems to belong to this period. In the Ingraham tale, Buffalo Bill went forth by night to steal a herd of ponies from an Indian village. All the redskins were asleep, except four on guard. Buffalo Bill had donned a complete Indian costume, and his face was painted. Thus disguised, he advanced, speaking in the Indian tongue. Suddenly he threw himself upon the first guard.

There was a short struggle, but no cry, for the scout's hand grasped the redskin's throat. A moment later and the second warrior *"found himself in a grip of iron and a knife blade piercing his heart."*

"This is red work, but it is man to man and in a few days the whole band would make a strike upon the settlements," muttered the scout. He moved to the third guard. There was the same short, fierce, silent fight, and Buffalo Bill arose from the ground a victor. The last Indian was negligently asleep at the foot of a tree.

"I'd like to let you sleep, Mr. Red-Skin, but you'd wake up at the wrong time, so you must follow your comrades to the happy hunting-grounds," he muttered, *as he bent over and seized the throat of the Indian in his powerful grip."*

Then Buffalo Bill rounded up the ponies and drove them off, after which the soldiers, who had hitherto taken no part in the offensive, came and captured the whole village. "This gallant act," said Ingraham, "made Cody known to every Indian on the border and they *regarded him with the greatest terror, while it made him an idol among the soldiers."*

The most gorgeous coloring in the background of Buffalo Bill was drawn from his three years of service with the Fifth Cavalry. Those were years of hard riding, hard drinking and hard fighting. It is little wonder that the truth about them is difficult to get. Expeditions rode out on the plains and into the hills and woods. There, far away from the newspaper correspondents and the generals who wrote the reports, many brave men did many brave deeds. After anxious days they came clanking back to the forts, weary, unshaven, bearing scalps and trophies. Under the spell of hero-worship and the mellow influence of the canteen they told many a jovial false-

hood to the women and the tenderfeet. One should not judge them harshly for that. Stout lying was the custom of the country, the social grace of the period. The fascinating liar was honored as the lumberjacks honored the author of each new yarn about Paul Bunyan, and as Nova Scotia hunters honor the guide who wins the annual lying contest. Charles M. Russell, the "cowboy artist," has said:

"Speaking of liars, the old West could put in its claim for more of 'em than any other land under the sun. The mountains and plains seemed to stimulate man's imagination. A man in the States might have been a liar in a small way, but when he comes west he soon takes lesson from the prairies, where ranges a hundred miles away seem within touchin' distance, streams run uphill and Nature appears to lie some herself. These men weren't vicious liars. It was love of romance, lack of reading matter and the wish to be entertainin' made 'em stretch facts and invent yarns."

Before Cody's service with the Fifth was ended, the first of the romancers who were to forge his reputation had appeared. They found rich material ready for them. Some of it was true; more they borrowed from the lives of other heroes who didn't need it and possibly did not deserve it much more than Bill Cody did.

The perfect example of the method appears in the linking of the names of Buffalo Bill and Wild Bill Hickok with the great raid in which Custer wiped out Black Kettle and finally broke the power of the Cheyenne. The truth about the raid is a matter of history. The fiery Custer, once more in favor after a court-martial, returned to the front, bent on making a fierce campaign. He went out after Black Kettle who, now that Roman Nose was dead, was the most active chief on the plains,

and who had been joined by many of Satanta's young Kiowas and some Arapahoes. It is doubtful whether Black Kettle really was on the war-path. But he was held to be responsible for the depredations of some of the members of his band. Custer marched into the valley of the Washita and found the Indians settled in thick woods along the river bank. At daybreak he charged the village. In the mêlée that lasted most of the day the troops killed one hundred and three Indians, including Black Kettle himself, as well as some squaws. They came marching back on December third. At the head the band proudly blared *Garry Owen*, and at the rear walked a long line of captive Indian widows and orphans. In spite of the protests of the tender-hearted East, there could be no doubt that the Battle of the Washita was a famous victory.

It was an opportunity which the less scrupulous biographers of Buffalo Bill and Wild Bill could not overlook. California Joe had been Custer's guide and nobody knew who had killed Black Kettle. But J. W. Buel in his widely read volume, *Heroes of the Plains*, described the fight, thus:

"Buffalo Bill and Wild Bill did almost the work of a regiment; braver men never went into an action, both fighting as though they were invulnerable. In the fury and rout which followed the first charge, Wild Bill gave chase to Black Kettle, head chief of the Cheyennes, engaged and overtook the fleeing red warrior, stabbing him to death. But the accomplishment of this heroic action would have cost him his own life, had not Buffalo Bill ridden with impetuous daring into the very midst of fully fifty Indians, who had surrounded Wild Bill, intent on either his capture or his death.

"The two daring and intrepid scouts plunged furiously

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into the midst of the Indians, each with a revolver in either hand, and literally carved their way through the surging mass of red-skins, leaving a furrow of dead Indians in their wake. Such fighting, such riding, and such marvelous intrepidity combined, were doubtless never equalled.

"If no other exploit than this were credited to the valor of the two Bills, their names would deserve inscription on Fame's enduring monument."

They would indeed. Moreover, if Buffalo Bill had actually saved the life of the famous Wild Bill in such a spectacular affray, it would have been by all odds the most thrilling feat of his whole career.

This was no casual dime novel invention, to be told but once. It was in a thick book which was widely read, and it was reprinted time and again by the press agents. It became a part of the Buffalo Bill that his audiences thought they knew. To Cody's credit it may be said that he never let it be included in his own books.

On the very day of the Washita raid, Cody was far away, guiding General Carr in Colorado. Three weeks earlier General Penrose with three hundred men had gone into the Canadian river country, where he was snowed in and short of rations. Carr had been sent to overtake him with a wagon-train of supplies. "I was particularly anxious to catch up with Penrose's command," Cody said, "as my old friend, Wild Bill, was among his scouts."

It was a severe march; there was heavy work for scouts and soldiers, and Cody guided the regiment through a blizzard which made him for the rest of his life partly deaf in one ear.

"I shall long remember that trip for it was necessary for me to go by the wind and not flinch from it, for in the blinding blizzard we would all soon be lost. The

direction brought the wind against my left ear, and as the storm soon became so blinding that even a black horse could not be seen ten feet from the picket-ropes, lariat lines were scattered along to guide the men, who kept so close almost as to touch each horse's tail. But I dared not change my position for fear of losing the direction, so for eight hours I held my left cheek and ear against the storm, and, of course, suffered greatly from frost-bite. I dared not dismount, as did many of the others, General Carr himself walking nearly all the distance, leading his horse. I had stuffed my ear with a piece of saddle blanket, but, notwithstanding that, the ear-drum was frozen, and for a time it gave me intense pain and suffering; and up to the present day it has quite affected my hearing on that side."

Of that march General Carr wrote: "Cody scouted for me on the almost level prairies in drifting snow, that obstructed all signs to guide General Penrose. Bill had to find high ground, where the snow had been blown off, to seek the trail; luckily for us he found it, and we saved at least five days difficult marching by going straight and arrived in time to save Penrose's command, which was in a most pitiable condition—men and horses."

Although Penrose had gone down the west bank of the Cimarron, Cody found that the best trail was on the east bank. He said: "We went with our immense wagon-train as far in one day as Penrose had in seven. His command had marched on to a plateau or high table-land so steep that not even a pack-mule could descend it, and he was obliged to retrace his steps a long ways, thus losing three days' time, as we afterwards learned."

At one place Carr found himself on the edge of a bluff so steep that the wagon-drivers said they could never go down without the wagons turning somersaults over the

mules. Cody had the wheels rough-locked and sent the whole train down. The six-mule teams held back as long as they could, then broke into a run and came galloping into the camp below without a single accident.

At last the tireless guide picked up three negro deserters, from whom he learned that Penrose and his troops were almost starved. A detachment of cavalry went ahead, with fifty pack-mules laden with food. Cody said, "I succeeded in reaching them, snowed in and in a terrible condition, for everything had been eaten up to such an extent that the horses and mules had eaten the manes and tails off each other." Almost the first man he saw when he reached the camp was Wild Bill, "my old, true and tried friend."

For the rest of that winter the two scouts enjoyed themselves hugely. Once they intercepted a Mexican bull-train coming up from New Mexico with beer to be sold to the soldiers at Camp Evans. "It was sold to our boys in pint cups, and as the weather was very cold we warmed the beer by putting the ends of our picket-pins heated red hot into the cups. The result was one of the biggest beer jollifications I ever had the misfortune to attend."

A few days later the two Bills patronized the sutler's store and got drunk enough to lead the American scouts in cleaning up fifteen Mexicans who were with Penrose. As a result of this rumpus Cody, for all his prestige as chief of scouts, was compelled by General Carr to keep himself busy for the rest of the winter hunting antelope to feed the camp.

Always eloquent in praise of his comrade, Cody used to say that by this time Wild Bill was as famous as the president of the United States. When spring came with no signs of more fighting, Wild Bill went home and

was hired as guide for a highly decorative excursion through the less wild portions of the West. Senator Henry Wilson, who organized the party, presented Wild Bill with a fine pair of ivory-handled pistols, which came in handy when Bill was elected marshal of Hays in the autumn.

Meanwhile, Cody went to visit his family, who during his long absence had been staying at St. Louis. His appearance was a shock to his wife. He wore a long mustache, a tiny goatee and hair straggling toward his shoulders.

"What on earth did you grow it for?" she cried.

"Why, I had to," he explained. "It's the fashion out West now. You're not a regular scout unless you've got this sort of rigout."

This was true. It had become a point of honor with all who must fight the Indian to let the hair grow long enough to form a respectable scalp-lock, so that if one should be so unfortunate as to fall in the fight, the savage might not be cheated of the scalp. To cut the hair short was to be a coward; to let it grow was to display sportsmanship and proclaim defiance. Custer did it, and Wild Bill, and Cody followed their example.

Louisa did not approve, and he offered to cut off the splendid growth, although he sighed, "I'd be kind of out of place with the boys." Then she relented, and afterward was glad of it, for as she said in the book to which her name was signed, after his death: "I'm afraid that even with the stories of his prowess on the plains, Buffalo Bill would not have been Buffalo Bill without that long hair, without that mustache and that little goatee—at least, he would not have been the unusual appearing character that he was, nor would he have been as handsome. And sometimes, as I look at his picture now—and long

for the time when I can be with him again—I shudder a little at the thought of what a woman's whim might have done."

When Cody returned to the plains after three weeks in St. Louis, he found himself in trouble. He had been supplied with an army horse to ride to the railroad at Sheridan. Against instructions he had left the horse, not in the quartermaster's corral, but with a friend who kept a hotel. There the officers found it in his absence. When he went to claim it, he was accused of selling government property. Twice in one day he thrashed the man who made the charge. Then he was impudent to General Bankhead, who ordered him arrested, "and into the guard house I went as a prisoner for the first and only time in my life."

Indignantly Cody wrote out a long telegram to his friend General Sheridan at Chicago, and was so insistent about having it sent that Bankhead finally gave him his horse and let him go back to Fort Lyon.

There was a new sort of duty waiting for him. Horse-thieves had been making off with valuable animals from the fort and Cody was sent after them with a party of three other scouts. They got their men. On the return journey, one escaped and the other broke loose and with one foot bare, led them a chase for eighteen miles before they caught him again. With admiration Cody said in his autobiography:

"Bevins' run was the most remarkable feat of the kind ever known, either of a white man or an Indian. A man who could run bare-footed in the snow eighteen miles through a prickly pear patch, was certainly a tough one, and that's the kind of a person Bill Bevins was. Upon looking at his bleeding foot I really felt sorry for him. He asked me for my knife, and I gave him my sharp-

pointed bowie, with which he dug the prickly pear briars out of his foot. I considered him as game a man as I had ever met."

After they had turned him over to the civil police, Bevins escaped again, sending word to Cody that if they ever met again he would kill him on sight. He became an outlaw in the Black Hills and eventually died in jail.

The Fifth Cavalry was now ordered to move to Fort McPherson, in Nebraska. During the march Cody messed with Major W. H. Brown, who, he said, "was a jolly good fellow, but sometimes he would get a little off." One day, camped near Sheridan, the two cronies were sent into town to buy food, but "unfortunately we were in too jolly a mood to fool away money on grub." They made some purchases which they put into the cook's wagon. They themselves did not show up at camp until the next morning. The cook came to ask what they had done with the provisions.

"Why, did we not give them to you—did you not bring them to camp in the ambulance?" asked Major Brown.

"No, sir; it was only a five-gallon demijohn of brandy, and two cases of Old-Tom-Cat gin," said the cook.

"The mischief!" Cody exclaimed; "didn't we spend any money on grub at all?"

"No, sir," replied the cook.

Other officers, however, had food in abundance and Brown and Cody discovered that their liquor was good for an invitation to any mess. "It is a fact that we got more provisions for our whiskey than the same money, which we paid for the liquor, would have bought."

A few days later at Elephant Rock Cody had what he described as "one of my closest calls in an incidental fight." The company with which he was advancing, while crossing a ravine, was attacked by about three hun-

dred Indians. Because his own story of this fight is unduly modest, we must turn to an account supplied by General Carr:

"Reaching the scene, we could see the Indians scattering in retreat. A figure with apparently a red cap rose slowly on the hill. For an instant it puzzled me, as it wore a buckskin and had long hair; but on seeing the horse I recognized Cody's Powder Face, and saw that it was Buffalo Bill without his broad-brimmed sombrero. On closer inspection I saw that his head was swathed in a bloody handkerchief, which served not only as a temporary bandage, but as a chapeau—his hat having been shot off, the bullet plowing his scalp badly for about five inches. It had ridged along the bone, and was bleeding profusely—a very close call, but a lucky escape.

"Our greatest need was supplies, which the hot trail had side-tracked, in the excitement of the necessary pursuit of the defiant foe. As the country was infested with Indians, and it was fifty miles to the nearest supply point, Fort Kearney, on consultation with Cody he decided that it would be best for him to undertake the job himself, a point characteristic of him, as he never shirked duties or faltered in emergencies. I gave him the best horse in the outfit, and, when twilight arrived, he decided, after patching up his head a little, to bring relief and meet us at a point 'northwest on the Platte River, about a day's march onward.' These were about the most definite directions any scout got in the trackless wastes of those days. . . . Cody reached us safely, making a successful ride of fifty miles during the night, and arriving at Fort Kearney at daylight.

"He had chased and fought Indians all day, been wounded, superintended the loading of supplies, and when, through his rare frontier instinct, he reached us,

he had been almost constantly in the saddle for forty hours. Pretty strenuous work, that!"

This wound was never mentioned by Cody, and it is possible that General Carr's memory confused the fight with another in which Cody was wounded, three years later. Errors might easily have crept into the foregoing account, for it was written by General Carr thirty-seven years later, as appears from the following letter which accompanied it.

Washington, D. C., December 29, 1906.

My Dear Cody: I enclose sketch of the Summit Springs Fight, and include the Advance Guard Fight under Major Babcock which led up to it, and in which you were wounded in the head, for publication in your "Rough Riders."

I am yours,

EUGENE A. CARR, Brevet Major-General.

CHAPTER XI

WHO KILLED TALL BULL?

A GOLDEN spike was driven into a tie where two rails joined near the shore of the Great Salt Lake. The pounding of the sledge was echoed in sharp clicks on thousands of telegraph instruments throughout thirty-nine states. Listening crowds roared and set off fire-crackers. The Liberty Bell rang in Philadelphia and a hundred guns boomed over New York harbor. Track from the West and track from the East had met at Promontory Point; the transcontinental railroad was complete.

On May 10, 1869, the nation was united at last and a dead-line of iron was laid down to warn the sullen Indians away from the settled prairie. Just ten days later Carr's cavalry rode into Fort McPherson, guided by Cody.

In spite of the railroad and the treaties and the two million dollars lately voted by Congress to promote civilization on the plains, there was still one band of Indians at large and hostile. The leader was Tall Bull, a brave and cruel chief who had escaped when Custer wiped out Black Kettle's camp. He had come north to join the party of Sioux which had ambushed Forsyth's scouts. It was Tall Bull's dog soldiers who had scattered before Carr's attack at Elephant Rock.

At Fort McPherson the Fifth Cavalry outfitted for a final expedition against Tall Bull. Three companies of the famous Pawnee scouts arrived as reinforcements.

These Pawnees, friendly to the whites and always deadly enemies of the Sioux, were the most picturesque

troops on the border. Recruited from the Pawnee reservation by Major Frank North, they were regular soldiers, well mounted and thoroughly schooled in military tactics. Though very proud of their regulation uniforms, they did not always wear the full equipment. Cody described them on parade: "They had been furnished a regular cavalry uniform and on this parade some of them had their heavy overcoats on, others their large black hats, with all the brass accoutrements attached; some of them were minus pantaloons and only wore a breech-clout. Others wore regulation pantaloons and no shirts and were bare headed; others again had the seat of the pantaloons cut out, leaving only leggins; some of them wore brass spurs, though without boots or moccasins." Again, he told of their difficulty with the English language. Placed on post and ordered to pass along the word, "Post number one, half past nine o'clock, all is well," they would say something like this: "Pass number half past five cents, go to hell!"

For several years the Pawnees had been guarding the track-layers along the Union Pacific. Brave fighting men and able hunters whether of beast or man, they won the affections of all the white officers who led them. Captain Luther North says of them: "On all of our campaigns it was the Pawnee scouts who were always the first to find Indian signs. They were always sent ahead to do the trailing. They found every war party and every Indian village that we captured, with the single exception of the Dull Knife village in the Big Horn mountains, which was found by the Arapahoe scouts. I would also like to tell you of one incident to show how faithful and reliable they were. While scouting south of the Republican River with ten men we were jumped by a war party of about one hundred and fifty hostiles. We were mounted, and

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I told the men we would run to the creek about a mile away, where we could dismount and fight. We were armed with Spencer carbines—seven shooters. When within half a mile of the creek my horse jumped on some ice, slipped and fell. I struck my head and was knocked unconscious. The boys stopped and dismounted, and while nine of them with their horses formed a ring around me, the other one picked me up. When I came to, the Indians were all around us, but the boys met them with such fierce resistance that they scattered and fell back to a safe distance. As soon as I could ride, we moved slowly to the creek, where we stood them off until night, when they rode away to the south. Do you wonder that I have a soft spot in my heart for those gallant boys?"

It was a fortunate day for Cody when he met the "white chief of the Pawnees," Frank North. No man on the plains knew Indians better than North, and none had so great a reputation for personal courage. He spoke the Pawnee tongue like a full-blood, and Cody said, "he was the best revolver shot, standing still, in the air, from horseback or at running animals or men that I ever saw." The veteran army scout and the young guide struck up a strong friendship. Unusually modest himself, North thrust Cody forward. Later the two became partners in a cattle ranch and North joined the Wild West Show.

The show program told a vivid story of North's greatest fight, which had occurred when he was a captain in 1865: "Capt. North was ordered to pursue a body of twelve Cheyennes and punish them for atrocities committed in the neighborhood of Fort Sedgwick. Taking twenty of his Pawnees, he got on the Cheyenne trail, and after following it about thirty miles, came up with the enemy, whom he found in line of battle. At the first

volley, however, the Cheyennes fled, followed hard by Capt. North. In this pursuit the Pawnees were unable to keep up with their captain, as their horses were too badly jaded to endure extra riding. Capt. North, however, was mounted on a superior animal, and, being full of desperate pluck, was determined to kill one Cheyenne at least. Looking back, at length, he saw his men fully a mile behind him, and several of them dismounted. Realizing the danger of his position, he took deliberate aim and fired at the Cheyennes, one of whom tumbled from his pony dead. At this the other Indians turned on the Captain, and he was compelled to flee for his life.

"The Indians rode rapidly after him, shooting constantly, until a bullet struck the Captain's horse in the side, rendering him unfit for further travel. Leaping to the ground Capt. North used his horse for a breastwork, from which he fired until the position had become too dangerous. He then started to run, but after getting several yards he remembered the two holsters on the saddle, each containing a loaded revolver, and he boldly returned for these. With these pistols he fought the Cheyennes nearly half an hour longer, and until relieved by Lieut. Small. This fight, one of the most daring ever made, is still spoken of, and the story frequently told over and over again among Western men, who almost reverence the name of Frank J. North."

In June, 1869, soon after Cody and North met at Fort McPherson, they started southward in search of Tall Bull. The quartermaster's order for this expedition is the earliest available document which refers to Cody. It reads:

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Headquarters Department of the Platte,
Chief Quartermaster's Office

Omaha, Nebraska, June 2, 1869.

Lieut. F. C. Grugan. 2nd Cav.

Acting Asst. Quartermaster

Fort McPherson, Nebraska.

Sir.

Bvt Maj Gen'l E. A. Carr 5th Cav. having applied for transportation for the expedition ordered from Fort McPherson, you are respectfully instructed to transfer to the Quartermaster of the expedition for the Republican under General Carr thirty 30 pack mules equipped, five 5 packers mounted, material for haddles and forage-sacks, with two civilian scouts, William Cody and ——Garry.

You will make requisition for any material needed in equipping the Expedition without delay; and report your action to this office.

Very respectfully,

Your obt servant.

WM MYERS

Bvt Brig General

Chief Quartermaster

The significance of this document is that it definitely establishes the fact that Cody was not an army officer, but a civilian.

Rivalry soon sprang up between the young white scout and the Pawnee regulars. At one of the early camps the mule herd was stampeded by the sudden whoops of Indians. Cody mounted bareback and gave chase. "I supposed certainly that I would be the first man on the ground, but I was mistaken, however, for the Pawnee Indians, unlike regular soldiers, had not waited to receive orders from their officers, but had jumped on their ponies

without bridles or saddles, and placing ropes in their mouths, had dashed off in the direction whence the shots had come, and had got there ahead of me." In the running fight which followed, one of the Pawnees, mounted on a big yellow horse, far outran Cody. Always keen for fast horse-flesh, Cody with the aid of Major North and some presents induced the Indian to swap. During the rest of his service with the troops, he rode this horse, which he called Buckskin Joe.

As a buffalo hunter, Buckskin Joe proved to be almost as good as old Brigham. Within a few days Cody was able to put him to good use in winning the respect of the Pawnees. While the command was in camp on the Republican River a buffalo herd was sighted. Twenty of the Pawnees made a "surround" and killed thirty-two. North then ordered his Indians to stay back and let the white man show what he could do alone. Galloping into the herd on Buckskin Joe, Cody killed thirty-six. "At nearly every shot I killed a buffalo, stringing the dead animals out on the prairie, not over fifty feet apart. This manner of killing was greatly admired by the Indians, who called me a big chief, and from that time on I stood high in their estimation."

Desperate news now reached General Carr. Tall Bull had made a break, fleeing north to cross the Platte and escape to the Black Hills. Furthermore, he had raided a settlement and was carrying off two white women, Mrs. Alderdice and Mrs. Weichel. A trail had been picked up which showed the prints of a woman's shoe and bits of gingham torn from a dress.

The forced march which followed was rated by General Nelson A. Miles as Carr's most brilliant achievement. Leaving the wagons behind, the regiment mounted its fastest horses and drove ahead. Cody was sent in advance with a few of the sharpest of the Pawnees. One

camp-fire after another showed that the pursuit was gaining. On July eleventh the scouts, creeping cautiously over a sand-hill near Summit Springs, saw below an Indian village of eighty-four lodges.

The surprise attack which followed, at two o'clock in the afternoon, was in the words of Price, historian of the regiment, "one of the most superb charges ever made by the Fifth Cavalry." Cody said, "We went through their village, shooting right and left at everything we saw." General Carr wrote the description which was used many years later in the Wild West Show publicity:

"When we all got started, I told the bugler behind me to sound 'the charge.' He put his trumpet to his mouth, but no sound came out. I asked him why he did not sound the charge, and he said, 'I—I disremember it, sir'; but it came to him directly, and he sounded it while all were going at full speed; and we were among the enemy before they had any idea that we were within a thousand miles. Then I heard the rattling of rifles on the right and left, plainly distinguishing the basso sound of Buffalo Bill's trusty rifle, old 'Lucretia Borgia.' Then occurred a most intense half hour, redolent with the excitement of battle—the conflict can never be properly described by the participants, and I can only say that the surprise was a grand success, while the charge was brilliant.

"Buffalo Bill got pretty well around the village when he went in on Captain Price's right. As he advanced, he saw a chief on a horse charging about and haranguing his men. He and his party laid for him, and, as he came nearer, Buffalo Bill shot him off his horse and got the animal. . . .

"After the fight, I entertained the chief's wife and family at tea and learned that the chief was named Tonka Haska—Tall Bull. He had three wives, but only the middle one was with him, a fine-looking squaw, the

daughter of a chief, with her little girl of eight years. When they were surprised, he tried to get away with them, but he looked back and saw the destruction of his band, which was his pride, and said 'My heart is bad; I cannot endure this. I will turn back and get killed. You escape, and treat the white woman well, and she will intercede for you when peace comes.' He turned back, firing as he charged, and by Cody's unerring rifle she saw him fall." This squaw, according to Cody himself, "esteemed it quite an honor that her husband, a great warrior himself, should have met his death at my hands."

He had noticed that the chief was riding an exceptionally handsome horse, and again he had an eye out for horse-flesh. He said:

"I crawled on my hands and knees three hundred yards up the ravine, stopping at a point which I considered would be in range of the Indian when he should again make the circuit. My judgment proved correct, for soon the Indian was seen loping his pony through the grass, and as he slackened speed to cross the ravine, I rose and fired, the aim being so well taken that the chief tumbled to the ground while his horse, after running a few yards, approached the soldiers, one of whom ran out and caught hold of the long lariat attached to the bridle, and thus secured the animal. When I returned to the company, all of whom had witnessed my feat of killing an Indian *at a range of fully four hundred yards*, by general consent the horse of my victim was given to me."

The italics are used not merely to signalize this extraordinarily long shot, but also to contrast with the statement made in Cody's *True Tales* that he shot Tall Bull "*when he was not more than thirty yards away*," and also with a spirited illustration used in his publicity which pictured him riding up to Tall Bull and *stabbing him with a long knife*.

These, however, are the least of the discrepancies. Mrs. Cody recalled that back home in St. Louis she read in the newspapers that during the attack her husband had rescued Mrs. Weichel, one of the captive white women. When her husband came home, she said, he laughed this off. She added that it was just "one out of the many heroic things with which he is credited that he did not accomplish. Nor did he ever claim it." We turn to an article which was printed in the *New York World* in 1897, signed with Cody's own name in facsimile, in which he is made to say:

"As I galloped down the slope I noticed two women, evidently prisoners, being dragged out of a tepee by squaws. While still some distance away, a squaw struck one of the prisoners on the head with a light hatchet, and I had the agony of seeing her drop lifeless to the ground. Spurring my horse to its utmost speed, I managed to reach and save the second white woman from the fatal blow. . . . *Tall Bull himself was killed by a shot from Lieut. Hayes's pistol.*"

Again the italics are ours. We now have not only a direct contradiction—he did *not* save Mrs. Weichel, and he *did* save Mrs. Weichel—but we have also these versions of the killing of Tall Bull:

1. Killed by Cody at range of four hundred yards (first autobiography).
2. Killed by Cody at range of thirty yards (*True Tales*).
3. Killed by Cody with a knife (show program).
4. Killed by Lieutenant Hayes with a pistol (*New York World* article).

Among so many excellent stories, how is one to choose?

The authors of the present volume made inquiry of a survivor of the battle—Lute North of Columbus, Ne-

braska, the brother of Frank North. His recollection was as follows:

"My brother and myself with about thirty-five of the Pawnee scouts charged the canyon. We were at the left end of the line and just in front of where Tall Bull had climbed the bank. When we were within about forty feet of him he raised his head above the bank and shot at my brother and dropped back out of sight. We had both jerked our horses to a stop and Frank had thrown himself off his horse so quick that I thought he had been hit. He handed me his bridle rein and said 'Ride up toward the boys' (meaning the scouts who were farther up the hill). 'When he hears the horses he will stick his head up again.' I started off on a lope and when Tall Bull raised his head for another shot Frank was ready and shot him through the center of the forehead. As soon as Frank fired I stopped and rode back to him and said 'Did you get him?' He said 'Yes.' . . . The fight at Summit Springs lasted from 2 P. M. to 5 and ended several miles from the village. When we got back and were making camp in the village at perhaps 5:30 Cody rode in. That was as near as he came to killing Tall Bull. This was not his fault you understand. A scout had to go where he was sent and Cody was with Col. Royal."

Lute North says that he did not hear the story giving Cody the credit of killing Tall Bull until three years later, after Cody had gone on the stage. "When I first heard it, I resented it and said to Frank, 'Why don't you correct that?' He just laughed and said, 'I am not in the show business.' "*

*North did join the Wild West Show later and the program which devotes a page to his exploits also contains the picture of Cody stabbing Tall Bull with a knife.

After North's death the industrious press agents gathered testimonial letters from army officers who had fought at Summit Springs. General Carr's story, already quoted, was a great stroke. General P. H. Hall wrote: "I recall that you shot Tall Bull." General Hayes was more guarded, speaking of the battle as "ending in a complete victory for the troops; the death of Tall Bull" and so on. Captain Price in his history of the regiment went only so far as to say that Cody "was conspicuous" during the pursuit.

In his tent on the show grounds Cody used to keep a clipping which he showed to visitors with great pride, as being the dispatch in which the *New York Herald* on July 20, 1869, had reported the battle. His book *True Tales* quoted this news dispatch as reading:

Omaha dispatches state that General Augur returned from Fort Sedgwick this morning. General Carr's victory is more complete than at first reported. Over 400 horses and mules were captured, with a large quantity of powder, and nearly five tons of dried buffalo meat. Among the killed was the noted chief Standing (Tall) Bull, killed by Cody, chief of scouts.

In the existing file of the *Herald* of that date, such a story can indeed be found. It says: "Among the killed is the noted chief Standing Bull," but it does not add "killed by Cody, chief of scouts." These vital words were supplied by the publicity men.

The exigencies of the show business led Cody in his declining years to add to the Wild West Show a reproduction of the battle of Summit Springs, in which he enacted the killing of Tall Bull. It was at this time that *True Tales* was written, and the range at which the shot was

fired reduced from four hundred to thirty yards—possibly because the act was more effective at short range.

In the records and in the memories of Buffalo Bill's audiences the killing of Tall Bull stands as one of his three greatest feats. Beneath so many discrepant accounts the truth lies for ever buried. As General Carr said, "The conflict can never be properly described by the participants." It seems probable that in the heat of battle any one of several men might have thought that it was his own bullet that brought down the chief.

Three facts only are certain. Somebody killed Tall Bull without recognizing him at the moment of firing, for the identification was made later by his squaw. Included in the booty with which Cody came out of the battle were two horses, one of which he named Powder Face and the other Tall Bull. And it was an important victory. Sixty-eight Indians, men and women, were slain while not one white man was even wounded.

"This battle," said Price, "ended Indian terrorism in Kansas and Nebraska." The legislature passed resolutions thanking the regiment for its efforts "by which the people of the State were freed from the ravages of the merciless savages."

There was little left to do except to chase a few stubborn hostiles. Finally, at Prairie Dog Creek, the last band, led by Pawnee Killer, was driven across the Platte. On this day, according to Captain Price, Cody narrowly escaped death. He and Major North were riding alone when fifty Indians fell upon them. "We turned our horses and ran, the bullets flying after us thick and fast—my whip being shot from my hand and daylight being put through the crown of my hat. We were in close quarters, when suddenly Lieutenant Valkmar came galloping up to our relief with several soldiers,

and the Indians seeing them whirled and retreated.”*

This was the closing engagement of the campaign. In October the regiment was disbanded and went into winter quarters. General Sheridan wrote: “I am now able to report that there has been a fulfilment of all the conditions which we had in view when we commenced our winter’s campaign last November—namely, punishment was inflicted; property destroyed; the Indians disabused of the idea that winter would bring security; and all the tribes south of the Platte forced on to the reservations.”

Thus closed for ever the brief chapter of the conquest of the plains. There was, Paxson says, a series of flurries after 1869, but “never again do these episodes resemble, however remotely, a general Indian war.”

The East, however, was just beginning to feel the full thrill of the West. In reaction from the long anxiety of the Civil War, people craved fresh sensations daily. The Indian campaigns had been vividly reported in the newspapers. The new railroads and the telegraph had brought the frontier very near. In the wiliness of the redskin and the bravery of the borderman there was timely and exciting romance.

Kit Carson was dead. Wild Bill was already secure in fame. The presses yawned for a new hero.

*The autobiography gives these and other precise details of the fight, but dates it in the fall of 1870. There can be no question that it occurred on September 26, 1869, for it is so entered in the records of the War Department.

CHAPTER XII

THE MIGHTY PEN

NED BUNTLINE, prodigious dime novelist, wiped his pen clean of the blood and brine of his sea tales and fared forth to the plains. Under contract to write a new series, he well knew the appetites of his youthful customers. He meant to feed them an actual living Indian fighter.

Arriving at Fort McPherson a short time after the battle of Summit Springs, Buntline went first to Major Frank North, whose reputation had reached his ears. He saw in the white chief of the Pawnees rich raw material for the dime novel. But North was diffident. He pooh-poohed the proposal. He couldn't see himself as a paper hero and would not lend his name to fiction.

"If you want a man to fill that bill," he said, "he's over there under the wagon."

Buntline went and poked under the wagon and woke up Bill Cody. The twenty-three-year-old scout rolled over, rubbed his eyes and looked up at the man who was to make him famous as Buffalo Bill.

Some other novelist might well have used Buntline himself as a central character. His real name was Elmo Z. C. Judson. He had begun to write sea stories when he was a midshipman. In one lifetime he reeled off the equivalent of two hundred volumes—more than Dickens and Scott together. He boasted that he once wrote a book of six hundred ten pages in sixty-two hours, during which time he scarcely ate or slept. One of his friends said, "Ned's life was one continuous series of sen-

sations . . . riots, shootings, speeches, duels, prisons—north and south—travels, dramas, yachts, wars, adventures. . . . He was the hero of a hundred fights and the victim of a hundred wrongs.”

Eloquent advocate of temperance, and a passionate patriot, he was one of the organizers and choice spirits of the Know-Nothings and of other societies. On that day when he and Cody met his chest blazed with about twenty gold medals and badges of secret orders.

An old wound had left him with a limp, which may explain the impression gained by Lute North, a witness of the meeting, that he was drunk when he arrived. Invited to go out with a scouting detachment, Buntline said, “I was to deliver a temperance lecture tonight, but no lectures for me when there is a prospect for a fight.”

There was no fight, but Buntline proved himself a good rider. During the time he spent at Fort McPherson and Fort Sedgwick, gathering facts and fictions and impressions for his stories, Cody let him ride Powder Face.

When he went home to write, Buntline did not forget Powder Face.

“‘One is as good on a scout as twenty, specially when he has got such an insect as my Powder Face under him, for that pony can out-smell, out-see and out-hear any livin’ thing, be it man, dog, or catamount, that ever yelped. Look at him standing there, one eye open and t’other one shut—but see how his ears pint. He knows I’m talking about him. Come here, Powder Face, and let the folks look at you.’

“The horse, a rather large-sized pony of full Indian breed, in color a regular light buckskin, with long black mane and tail, walked up to the porch and rested his nose on the shoulder of his young master.

“Clean-limbed, deep in the chest, heavy in the arms

and quarters, full of muscle, he was a splendid specimen of that breed.

"Isn't he a rare insect? He can run ten hours and never flag, swim any current this side of the big hills, and he knows as much as I do about hide and seek. Powder Face, go bring your saddle and bridle—we're going on a scout.'"

When the scouting ended in October, Cody found himself stranded at Fort McPherson with no occupation and no income. Racing his horses provided him with both. Powder Face proved to be "one of the swiftest ponies I ever saw" and Tall Bull "the fastest running horse west of the Mississippi River." Not until they had won many hundreds of dollars for their young master, who would bet his last cent on them, did the officers and the Pawnees learn that it was not safe to make matches against them. Cody then began to try stunts.

Exhibiting his skill for the flattering Buntline may have put notions in his head, and he had seen equestrians perform at a circus recently. He found that he could ride Tall Bull bareback, seizing the mane with his left hand, resting his right hand on the withers, and, while going at full speed, jump to the ground and spring upon the horse's back again eight times in succession.

Winning more money by racing in this fashion, the young scout, who was one day to lead the Congress of Rough Riders of the World, tasted the joys of applause and found them sweet. Altogether Fort McPherson was, he decided, a lively and pleasant post. In the center of country alive with game and now peaceful, it seemed a good place to settle down.

He built a small cabin, one of a circle of six outside the stockade, and wrote to his family that there was a home ready for them. Early in the spring his wife and daugh-

ter came from Topeka, where they had been living during the winter, after a year in St. Louis, and his two sisters came on from Leavenworth.

Three women and a child were a heavy responsibility for the youthful Cody, particularly since they shared the eastern belief that Indians were always on the war-path and usually just over the next hill. Once, in his absence, his sisters went with officers to hunt buffalo. Returning to find them gone, he strode into the fort and stormed at the officer on duty—as Helen tells it:

"'Didn't you know,' cried Will, 'that my continued absence meant danger in the air? Fine idea, to let a party of ladies go beyond the fort on such a foolhardy expedition before I had assured you it was safe to do so! Understand, if any harm comes to my sisters, I'll hold the government responsible!'

"With which tremendous threat he mounted the swiftest horse in camp and rode away before the astonished officer had recovered from his surprise.

"He was able to track us over the sand-hills, and reached us, in accepted hero fashion, in the very nick of time."

From his galloping horse, with one shot, he brought down a bull buffalo that was charging upon the girls. This was witnessed by a reporter, Dr. Frank Powell, later known as "White Beaver." Helen says: "The next day's Omaha paper contained an account of the hunt from Dr. Powell's graphic pen, and in it May Cody received all the glory of the shot that laid the buffalo low."

The only Indian trouble of that year was the theft of some horses, and among them the beloved Powder Face. Cody went out with the detail under Lieutenant Thomas which chased the marauders. It was a chase good enough to be mentioned in the annals of the Fifth Cavalry, for

it covered a hundred and twenty miles in two days, destroyed the Indian camp and came back as usual with not only most of the stolen stock but with a surplus of Indian animals. Cody told how he killed two of the thieves with a single bullet, a feat which has its parallels in the traditions of many other marksmen: "We continued the chase for two or three miles, overtaking a couple who were mounted on one horse. Coming up behind them I fired my rifle, when about thirty feet distant; the ball passed through the backs of both, and they fell headlong to the ground; but I made no stop however just then, for I had my eye on the gentleman who was riding Powder Face. It seemed to be fun for him to run away from us, and run away he did, for the last I saw of him was when he went over a divide, about three miles away. I bade him adieu. On my way back to the Indian camp I stopped and secured the war bonnets and accoutrements of the pair I had killed, and at the same time gently 'raised their hair.'"

On his own testimony, he was now beginning to be accused of showing off and of being unduly eager for notoriety. Tongues wagged over the return of this expedition. Lieutenant Thomas hoped to be mentioned for gallantry. Cody said: "I knew the officer in command, and was sure that if he came up he would take all the glory of the capture away from Lieutenant Thomas and myself. Naturally I wanted all the credit for Thomas and myself, as we were entitled to it. The major in command sent out scouts to find our trail. Texas Jack, who was on this duty, returned, and reported that he had found it, and that we were going back to the fort by another route. The major said: 'That's another of those tricks of Cody's. He will guide Thomas back and he will get all the glory before I can overtake him.'"

The trick suc-

ceeded and "the major was hotter than a wounded coyote." He said that "he did not intend to be treated in any such manner by any scout, even if it were General Sheridan's pet, Buffalo Bill."

Thomas, however, got his complimentary mention. "I myself," said Cody, "was lucky enough to receive not only 'mention' but a medal from Congress in reward for my own small share in the affair."*

Notoriety more startling and of a more practical sort came when Buntline's first yarn appeared. Sitting in his rude cabin at Fort McPherson, the young scout stared and laughed and wondered as he saw his name blazoned in great type on these fascinating pages printed in far-off New York.

They told of deeds he had never done and could never hope to match, of talents which he did not possess and noble sentiments which he did not boast. Incredulous, he saw himself through the rosy mist of Buntline's cascading prose:

"'Better son never blessed a mother, wild as he was,' said Mrs. Cody with love in every tone, as her glance followed his form. 'Rough he may be to the others, but to us he is kind and gentle as the breeze of a summer eve.'

"'Yes, ma'am, Buffalo Bill is just as good as was ever made, no matter whar you find him. I've been his mate now goin' on three year, and I've tried him in all kinds of weather,' said Wild Bill. 'There isn't a bit of white in his liver, nor no black in his heart. What he says and does is as day, and when he goes in for a fight he don't ask to see the hand he has got to play against, but he

*Here again Cody's collaborators had the dates mixed. He did not receive the Congressional medal until two years later, and for an entirely different engagement.

January 31st, and February 1st

NED BUNTLINE'S

GREAT REALISTIC DRAMA, THE

SCOUTS OF THE PRAIRIE



INTRODUCING THE

Genuine Western Heroes

BUFFALO BILL

TEXAS JACK,

NED BUNTLINE,

TEN INDIAN WARRIORS,

THE GREAT DANGEROUS

M'LE MORLACCHI,

AND FULL DRAMATIC COMPANY.

NED BUNTLINE'S SENSATIONAL DRAMA OF

SCOUTS OF THE PRAIRIE,

BUFFALO BILL, by the original Hero, ...	Hon. W. F. CODY
TEXAS JACK, by original Hero, ...	J. B. OMOHUNDRO
CALE DURG, ...	NED BUNTLINE
Mormon Ben, ...	Mr. Westworth
Phelim O'Laugherty, ...	Harry Gilbert
.....	Walter Plancher

Showbill of the drama in which Buffalo Bill made his stage
début in December, 1872



Kit Carson Cody, who died at the age of six. Buffalo Bill's pride in his only son is shown by the fact that he had him posed with a little rifle

makes 'em show afore he's through. Bill is ahead of wild cats, twenty to one, and I'm jist the man to bet my pile on proving it.' "

Never missing a chance to preach his favorite doctrine of teetotalism, Buntline made Buffalo Bill declaim:

" 'There is more fight, more headache—aye, more heartache in one rum-bottle than there is in all the water that ever sparkled in God's bright sunlight. And I, for the sake of my dear brothers and sisters, and for the sweet, trusting heart that throbs alone for me, intend to let the rum go where it belongs, and that is not down my throat, at any rate.' "

Never did Bill Cody make any pretense of keeping such a pledge. With relish he told of an incident of that very spring, when General Duncan sent for him to come and shoot at a mark with him: "I did not feel much like shooting anything except myself, for on the night before I had returned to Fort McPherson and spent several hours in interviewing the sutler's store in company with Major Brown. I looked around for my gun and found that I had left it behind. The last I could remember about it was that I had it at the sutler's store." General Duncan was elderly and a blusterer (the story went that a cannon-ball had once bounced off his head and killed one of the toughest mules in the army). Fearful of a reprimand, Cody borrowed a gun and shot the match. The general won.

Soon after this Cody was sent to Fort Russell as witness in a court-martial. He carried in his pockets a list of articles which his wife wanted for furnishing the cabin. Unfortunately the court-martial was postponed for a week, a week in which Cody met a lot of old friends—"a pretty wild bunch," he called them. What with roulette and horse-racing, he forgot all about Mrs. Cody's furni-

ture. Furthermore, "I woke up one morning and found that I was dead broke." He had to sell his horse Tall Bull and when he got home had to send a mail-order to Omaha for the furniture.

On the twenty-sixth of November, 1870, his son was born. It seemed to Cody that the boy should be named Elmo Judson, in recognition of Ned Buntline's recent services. The army officers whom he consulted did not like this idea, and finally, at the suggestion of Major North, the name Kit Carson was selected.

With a growing family Cody began to worry about money. He now had no horse of his own, and could ride only his army mount, Buckskin Joe. Probably General Sheridan would give him a commission if he would be satisfied with an officer's pay and the routine of army life. He wanted more than that; Ned Buntline had whetted his interest in the East which he had never seen.

He wondered whether he might turn to account the one thing he knew best—handling horses. "I could drive any horse that ever had a bit in his mouth and a lot that hadn't," he said. He thought of going to a city and getting a job as coachman for some rich family. He thought of trying to join a fire department. "I knew if I could learn the city streets as well as I knew the Indian trails I could take a fire team through the down town district in record breaking time."

An experiment in turning an honest penny had lately been tried by Wild Bill. In his capacity as city marshal at Hays, Bill had shot up several soldiers. General Sheridan had demanded his arrest, dead or alive. Thus exiled, Bill had taken a herd of buffalo and some Comanche Indians to Niagara Falls and put on an exhibition of buffalo chasing. The show had been a great success, except for one fact. It had necessarily been held in the

open, and Bill had found no way of charging admission. He had speedily returned to his regular vocation of preserving law and order, this time among the gay cattle men at Abilene—"the wickedest city in the world."

There were not yet enough civilians at McPherson to require the services of a marshal, but they did need a justice of the peace, and Cody got the job. This duty he performed less with the aid of documents and statutes than of whisky and his reliable needle-gun, Lucretia Borgia, which he said was "the best writ of replevin that I can think of." In one case he went out and recovered a horse. He fined the thief twenty dollars and costs. "I pocketed the \$20, of course. Some people might think it was not a square way of doing business, but I didn't know any better just then."

One of the sergeants wanted Cody to perform his marriage ceremony. "I had braced up for the occasion by imbibing rather freely of stimulants, and when I arrived at the house with a copy of the statutes of Nebraska . . . I looked carefully through the statutes to find the marriage ceremony but my efforts were unsuccessful." He finally invented a rough and ready marriage ceremony which concluded, "I now pronounce you to be man and wife, and whomsoever God and Buffalo Bill have joined together let no man put asunder."

While at these mild pursuits he watched the frontier moving inexorably westward. Kansas apples were winning prizes at eastern fairs. Kansas was raising money to send to the sufferers from the great Chicago fire. Horace Greeley was predicting that Kansas would become the fourth largest state in the Union. Religious conventions were rife throughout the state. A literary monthly magazine was founded. The annual report of the Indian Commissioners commented on the remark-

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able spectacle of warlike Sioux "hunting peacefully for buffalo without occasioning any serious alarm among the thousands of white settlers whose cabins skirt the borders."

This very pacification of the plains, which threw the scout out of work, suddenly brought him new and easier employment—thanks in some measure to Buntline.

Now that the danger of being scalped was past, tenderfeet began to hurry west to get a shot at the harried bison before he should become extinct. It would lend zest to their sport and add much local color to have the genuine Buffalo Bill as guide.

Adult readers did not have to believe that the adventures Buntline told so well were historically true. The impressive fact was that Buffalo Bill himself was no creature of the imagination. He actually existed in the flesh. On the word of General Sheridan, there was, out there on the mysterious plains, a handsome, long-haired scout who answered to the very nickname that screamed from the paper covers. Frank Merriwell and Nick Carter and Sherlock Holmes never came to life and mingled affably with ordinary human beings. Buffalo Bill did. Those who could afford it might travel to his native haunts and see him ride and shoot and swing the lariat, might drink with him, finger his string of scalps and listen to his yarns.

Call it hero-worship, or curiosity, or a cultivated taste for the bizarre; there were many eager to know Buffalo Bill and to hunt with him. They came and he won them.

CHAPTER XIII

HOBNOBBING WITH THE DUDES

Buffalo hunting was the rage. No longer needed for meat or hides, the bison were falling in countless thousands in the name of sport. A contemporary writer drew the disgraceful picture:

"All over the plains, lying in disgusting masses of putrefaction along valley and hill, are strewn immense carcasses of wantonly slain Buffalo. . . .

"Probably the most cruel of all bison-shooting pastime, is that of firing from the cars. During certain periods in the spring and fall, when the large herds are crossing the Kansas Pacific Railroad, the trains run for a hundred miles or more among countless thousands of the shaggy monarchs of the plains. . . . The rate per mile of passenger trains is slow upon the plains, and hence it often happens that the cars and buffalo will be side by side for a mile or two. . . . During these races the car-windows are opened, and numerous breech-loaders fling hundreds of bullets among the densely crowded and flying masses. Many of the poor animals fall, and more go off to die in the ravines. The train speeds on, and the scene is repeated every few miles until Buffalo Land is passed."

Genuine sportsmen, however, could not enjoy such casual slaughter. They must chase the herds and fire from horseback. They must camp in the open, tempering its rigors with champagne. They must mingle with army officers and Indians, and as their guide they must have Buffalo Bill.

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When General Sheridan announced that he was bringing out a hunting party of New York "millionaires," Buffalo Bill was not only glad of the job, but keen enough to look and act the part. He sized up the party as a "nobby and high-toned outfit," and knew what was expected of him. "I determined to put on a little style myself," he said. "I curled my front teeth; brushed up a new buckskin toga; put on my Sunday moccasins; combed out the fringe in my trousers and left nothing undone except banging my front hair."

On the first morning of the hunt he came riding down from the fort to the millionaires' camp, mounted on a snowy white horse, a "gallant stepper," with Lucretia Borgia in his hand. Under the light buckskin suit, generously fringed, he had on a crimson shirt much ornamented, and on his head a wide sombrero. "I felt first-rate that morning, and looked well," he said.

The hunters found their guide, as General Davies put it, "a mild, agreeable, well-mannered man, quiet and retiring in disposition." For ten days they had good hunting not only of buffalo but of many kinds of game. One hundred cavalrymen were their escort, a train of sixteen government wagons carried their baggage and forage, and there were three four-horse ambulances for those who were tired of the saddle. They waked each morning to the blare of the bugle, and pitched their tents at night by pleasant streams with song and story.

One evening they held a mock trial with Lawrence Jerome as the culprit and Cody as judge. "The trial afforded us considerable amusement, and gave me a splendid opportunity to display the legal knowledge which I had acquired while acting as justice of the peace at Fort McPherson."

One who enjoyed himself most was James Gordon

Bennett of the *New York Herald*. Bennett was a connoisseur of characters. One evening toward the end of the hunt, he said:

"Cody, ever been East?"

"Yes, sir, I've been down to Omaha."

"That ain't East. I want you to come to New York."

"Not on your life, sir."

"Why?"

"I came near not getting back when I went to Omaha. I got busted there."

"Don't worry about the expense. I want you to come."

Bennett said a word in the ear of General Sheridan and then and there a chain of fortunate circumstances began to form.

The hunt ended at Hays. The city had thrived since Cody had left it three years earlier. A writer of the day described it:

"The depot for the grand Santa Fé trade, the town was crowded with Mexicans and speculators. Large warehouses along the track were stored with wool awaiting shipment east, and with merchandise to be taken back with the returning wagons. . . .

"Hays City by lamp-light was remarkably lively and not very moral. The streets blazed with the reflection from saloons, and a glance within showed floors crowded with dancers, and gaily dressed women striving to hide with ribbons and paint the terrible lines which that grim artist, Dissipation, loves to draw upon such faces. With a heartless humor he daubs the noses of the sterner sex a cherry red, but paints under the once bright eyes of woman a shade dark as the night in the cave of despair. To the music of violin and stamping of feet, the dance went on, and we saw in the giddy maze old men who must have been pirouetting on the very edge of their graves."

THE MAKING OF BUFFALO BILL

Wild Bill, forgiven, had come back to Hays to resume his former responsibilities as marshal. Presumably the two scouts celebrated their reunion at the old haunts and roared over the citified romping of the millionaires who had departed by train to the East.

When Bennett got back to New York, Buffalo Bill was glorified in the *Herald* as the "beau ideal of the plains." At this moment of promise he had a narrow escape from oblivion. Reports of massacres were coming from Arizona. The reliable old Fifth Cavalry, after two years of idleness at McPherson, was being sent down there. Fond as he was of the regiment, Cody did not want to go; he said with truth that Arizona was "not very desirable country to soldier in."

Fortunately, just a few days before the regiment took train, there came to the commanding officer a letter from General Sheridan which said: "*Don't take Cody.*" This order may have been the turning-point in the career of Buffalo Bill; had he gone south into the desert he would have missed the chance that was to carry him east into the limelight.

Sheridan had a good reason for wanting Cody left behind. Brilliant as the millionaires' hunt had been, a more brilliant one was to come. The Grand Duke Alexis of Russia was visiting America. All agog before the spectacle of royalty, America groveled at the feet of Alexis. The Duke wished to chase the bison. Good. It should be arranged, and by none other than General Sheridan. For guide, of course, they must have Buffalo Bill. The need of the troops for a scout was as nothing beside the need of a picturesque figure to grace the royal entertainment.

In January, 1872, the Grand Duke and his retinue

arrived at North Platte on a special train, with General Sheridan and Custer. That buffalo hunt was to be a feature of Cody's publicity for the next forty years. And well it might be, for Buffalo Bill made good. The Grand Duke was permitted to ride Cody's favorite horse, Buckskin Joe. With assistance, he killed eight buffalo. He was led to believe that he had dropped one of them with a revolver-shot at a hundred paces. Among the Indians hired for the event was Two-Lance, who performed his feat of killing a buffalo with a single arrow driven so hard that it passed entirely through the body and came out on the other side.

Alexis enjoyed a flirtation with the ruddy daughter of Chief Spotted Tail and had a taste of old-time driving behind six galloping horses with Cody pushing on the reins. For his services, Cody received a coat of Russian furs and a set of jeweled cuff links and scarf pin, each as large as a half-dollar.

A greater reward was offered by General Sheridan. He reminded Cody of Bennett's invitation to visit New York and said: "You will never have a better opportunity than now. . . . Write a letter to General Stager, of Chicago, that you are now prepared to accept the invitation, and he will send you a pass."

Events were being shaped rapidly. It is possible that Buntline was the real instigator. It is possible, too, that Cody knew that something was about to happen in New York in which he had a personal concern. He took the suggestion. The railroad passes came promptly. Bennett sent five hundred dollars, and the rough borderman who had lately dreamed of going to the city to become a coachman or the driver of a fire-engine started east to hobnob with the dudes.

He stopped off at Chicago where he was fitted to a

full dress suit and was entertained at several dinners and at a ball which he recognized as "swell." He found himself exposed to the polite stares of a throng of well-dressed men and the sidelong glances of the most beautiful women he had ever seen. It was disconcerting but very pleasant. With high heart he went on to Niagara Falls, to Rochester and, at last, to New York.

A mad and merry city it was, just at the glittering dawn of the "gilded age." Millionaires bloomed overnight. Tradesmen became plutocrats. Railway wrecking by speculation had begun almost before the tracks had been laid. Jim Fisk was shot to his death in the Grand Central Hotel. Boss Tweed was indicted for felony. The new aristocracy was buying art and armor, fine bindings and jewels. For the masses, says Beard, there were "gaudy and lively amusements organized and managed on commercial principles. Vaudeville shows, prize fights, circuses, dime museums and cheap theatres, like the spectacles of ancient Rome, kept countless millions happy in penury." The "can-can" was brought from Paris, Barnum opened his "greatest show on earth," and Bill Cody blew in from the plains and was put up at the Union Club.

He visited Ned Buntline at the Brevoort. He was dined at the mansion of August Belmont. Becoming "badly demoralized and confused," he failed to show up at a dinner given for him by Bennett, and could only explain that he "had been out on a scout and got lost." He went to the Liederkrantz masked ball, which reminded him of an Indian war-dance. Here he wore buckskins and attracted considerable attention, "especially when I took part in the dancing and exhibited some of my backwoods steps, which, although not as graceful as some, were a great deal more emphatic."

There was a skilful hand moving quietly through the gay pattern of those holidays. Buntline took the delighted plainsman to see Booth play *Julius Cæsar*. Then on the night of February twentieth, he took him down to the Bowery Theater for the opening performance of a new play. It was called *Buffalo Bill, the King of Bordermen*, a drama made by Fred G. Maeder from Buntline's stories.

On the word of the *Herald* reviewer, this play was "one of the most extraordinary and thrilling melodramas ever played on the Bowery boards." While J. B. Studley impersonated him on the stage, the real Buffalo Bill sat in a not inconspicuous private box. Studley played the part to the perfection demanded by Bowery audiences, who were strong for bloodshed and hairbreadth rescues. Surrounded by Indians, the hero hid in a hollow log. This log the warriors used for fuel on their council fire. When it got too hot for him, the hero hurled his powderhorn into the flames, blowing the redskins in all directions, but himself escaping unscathed. The climax came in the third act, when Buffalo Bill fought a hand-to-hand duel with the villain, none other than Jake McCanles. They used knives reported to be three feet long, and Jake fell dead. After that victory the gallery gods, who ordinarily were angered by sentiment, were tolerant of a brief love passage in which the fair Kitty Muldoon plighted her troth to Buffalo Bill.

They discovered that the real Buffalo Bill was in the house. The spotlight was turned on him and the Bowery rocked with applause. They clamored for a speech. "I found myself standing behind the footlights and in front of an audience for the first time in my life. I looked up, then down, then on each side, and every-

where I saw a sea of human faces, and thousands of eyes all staring at me."

The few words which he was able to speak could not be heard even by the leader of the orchestra. But the manager declared himself impressed and miraculously offered Cody five hundred dollars a week to play the part himself. Cody felt certain that he could never talk to a crowd of people like that. "You might as well try to make an actor out of a government mule," he said. And yet—there was a new sort of excitement in this. New York was the best camp he had ever seen.

The recipient of so many honors felt that he ought to give a dinner himself. He still had fifty dollars, which seemed enough. He gave the party at Delmonico's. When morning came and with it the reckoning, it dawned upon him that his fifty dollars would pay for little more than one plate. In desperation he called for Buntline, who settled the bill. A few hours later Buffalo Bill was on his way back to the West.

Between trains at Omaha he had a final fling. A party of friends met him and insisted that he let them see how he looked in his clawhammer suit and silk hat. The consequent celebration was so successful that he forgot his trunk. They put him on his westbound train in a stateroom well fortified with champagne and still wearing the evening clothes. The next day he rode into Fort McPherson, to all appearances fresh from an eastern ballroom, with his long hair tucked up under the stovepipe hat. He used to tell of it with relish:

"'Look at the dude! Look at the dude!' they shouted as I rode among them. Paying no attention to them, I galloped up and overtook General Reynolds. Saluting him, I said:

"'General, I have come to report for duty.'

"'Who in thunder are you?' he demanded, looking at me without a sign of recognition in his eyes.

"'Why, General,' I said, 'I am to be your guide on this expedition.'

"He looked at me a second time, and a grin spread over his face. 'Can it be possible that you are Cody? . . . Let down your hair,' he commanded. I took off my hat, and my hair fell over my shoulders. A loud yell went up from both officers and enlisted men, as the word went up and down the line that the dude they had been bedeviling was none other than Buffalo Bill."

The Third Cavalry had replaced the Fifth at McPherson. A few recalcitrant Indians had made a raid near by and a party was going out to punish them. On this scout, Cody had an assistant in the person of Texas Jack Omohundro. Dime novel tradition, as represented by Prentiss Ingraham, held that the Kansas guide and the Texas cowboy had met during the Civil War and Cody had said:

"'Yes, Texas Jack, pards for life will we be, even though now under different flags, and let me tell you, and your comrades, that this war will not last always, so when it ends come my way to the plains of the far West, and you'll find a firm friend in Buffalo Bill.'

"'I know it,' firmly responded Texas Jack. . . .

"The Texans all round shook hands with the Northern scout, and Buffalo Bill and Texas Jack thus parted, to meet again years after upon the plains, when they did indeed become pards for life."

During the expedition a new and important friendship was formed, and Cody got the Congressional Medal of Honor, which his publicity attributed to an earlier affair. The exact reason for the award of the medal is stated by the adjutant-general of the United States Army as follows:

THE MAKING OF BUFFALO BILL

On May 22, 1872, Mr. Cody was issued a Medal of Honor for gallantry in action at Platte River, Nebraska, the basis for the award being a report made by Captain Charles Meinhold, Troop B, 3d U. S. Cavalry, dated at Fort McPherson, Nebraska, April 27, 1872, descriptive of the pursuit of, and action with, a marauding party of Indians by a detachment of his company under his command.

The citation as written by Captain Meinhold states:

Mr. Cody had guided Sergeant Foley's party with such skill that he approached the Indian camp within fifty yards before he was noticed. The Indians fired immediately upon Mr. Cody and Sergeant Foley. Mr. Cody killed one Indian, two others ran toward the main command and were killed. While this was going on Mr. Cody discovered a party of six mounted Indians and two lead horses running at full speed at a distance of about two miles down the river. I at once sent Lieutenant Lawson with Mr. Cody and fifteen men in pursuit. He, in the beginning of the chase, gained a little upon them, so that they were compelled to abandon the two lead horses, which were captured, but after running more than twelve miles at full speed, our jaded horses gave out and the Indians made good their escape.

Mr. William Cody's reputation for bravery and skill as a guide is so well established that I need not say anything else but that he acted in his usual manner.

For forty-four years the Congressional Medal was one of his proudest possessions, but just after his death the

award was canceled and his name was struck from the Medal of Honor list. This long-delayed action was not a denial of Cody's heroism. He shared, with many others, the onus of an ancient War Department scandal. In the years after the Civil War the Medal of Honor was shamefully abused. It was awarded almost indiscriminately on the recommendation of officers of low rank. The World War finally brought retroactive reform. Under an act of Congress approved June 3, 1916, the records were reexamined and corrected. On February 15, 1917, nine hundred and eleven names, including Cody's, were permanently removed from the list. The adjutant-general explains:

"The board of officers which cancelled the award to Mr. Cody and certain others mentioned in its report, found that the medals in question were not issued for the cause specified in the law, viz: 'distinguished conduct by an *officer* or *enlisted man* in action involving actual conflict with an enemy by such *officer* or *enlisted man* or by troops with which he was serving at the time of such action.' He was employed in the capacity of a civilian scout and guide at the time when he performed the act for which the medal was awarded and was not an officer or enlisted man."

Cody's own story of the fight under Captain Meinhold's command differs from that given in the captain's report. The autobiography says:

"I finally gave the signal to charge, and we dashed into the little camp with a yell. Five Indians sprang out of a willow tepee, and greeted us with a volley, and we returned the fire. I was riding Buckskin Joe, who with a few jumps brought me up to the tepee, followed by

my men. We nearly ran over the Indians who were endeavoring to reach their horses on the opposite side of the creek. Just as one was jumping the narrow stream a bullet from my old 'Lucretia' overtook him. He never reached the other bank, but dropped dead in the water. . . . Two mounted warriors closed in on me and were shooting at short range. I returned their fire and had the satisfaction of seeing one of them fall from his horse. At this moment I felt blood trickling down my forehead, and hastily running my hand through my hair I discovered that I had received a scalp wound."

This was the only wound he ever mentioned himself, and probably the one which his wife said was "the one and only wound my husband ever received." He had the satisfaction, by his own account, of killing the Indian who wounded him; he took several scalps back to the fort.

It was appropriate—and it may have been more than coincidence—that Buffalo Bill received his Medal of Honor and his one wound after he had become the protégé of a dime novelist, the crony of New York dudes, a theatrical character and himself a candidate for the stage.

He was nearly done with the plains. They seemed stale and arduous, now that he had felt the soft touch of luxury and blinked in the bright lights.

CHAPTER XIV

TROUPING IN BUCKSKINS

THE theater was calling. A letter came from Buntline repeating the demand that Cody go on the stage in his own person as Buffalo Bill. "You'll prove a big card, as your character is a novelty."

At first, his wife said, Will simply laid the letter aside and whooped. "A whole hall full of women looking at me through those spy-glasses! Mamma, I'd be awful scared. I'd get out there and just get glassy-eyed from looking at those lights. I couldn't do it. I'd just naturally be tongue-tied."

Buntline persisted, in one letter after another. Cody mentioned the idea to his new comrade, Texas Jack, who jumped at it. Jack thought it would be wonderful to be an actor. He would like to be one himself.

There was almost no scouting now, and buffalo hunting was falling off, although both Cody and Texas Jack had been taking out a few parties, including that of the Earl of Dunraven. Lots of money could be made on the stage, Buntline said. Cody wanted money more than ever. His sisters had married and were off his hands, but another daughter, Orra, was born in August, and Mrs. Cody wanted to go to her parents again.

His neighbors made the problem more complex by electing him to the Nebraska legislature. This was an unsought honor bestowed by the Democratic party. He was elected by a majority of forty-four votes.

The dilemma which he faced recalled the two prophecies made long before. Should he go into politics and

rise to the presidency of the United States, as his mother had always said he would do? Or should he make a start toward the career to which his sister said he had pledged himself in boyhood—that of owning a show?

His wife recorded the fateful choice:

“‘Mamma,’ he said, ‘I know I’d be a fizzle at legislatin’. I don’t know just how bad I’d be at actin’. I guess maybe I’d better find out.’” He wrote to Buntline that he was coming and would bring Texas Jack with him.*

“I shall never forget the time I had putting him on his feet as a showman,” said Buntline. On December 12, 1872, the two scouts got off a train at Chicago, to be met by Buntline. To his great consternation, they had overlooked the little matter of bringing twenty Indian bucks for the show. But Buntline himself had been guilty of greater neglect. He had failed to write the play. Boldly he took his two actors to see Jim Nixon, manager of the theater which he had engaged—one of the side-boarded, canvas-topped affairs which had been put up since the great fire had destroyed all the old theaters.

Nixon approved the scouts’ physique and costumes, but wanted to read the play.

“I have not yet written the drama,” said Buntline.

This was a Wednesday and the opening was set for the next Monday night. Nixon was indignant. The play could not possibly be ready; he must cancel the contract.

“What rent will you ask for your theater for next week?” said Buntline.

“Six hundred dollars.”

*He never went to the capital to claim his seat in the legislature. Truth to tell, his election was contested, and he resigned. For the next fifteen years, however, he was billed wherever he appeared as “The Honorable W. F. Cody.”

TROUPE IN BUCKSKINS

Buntline hired the theater on the spot and rushed his stars to a hotel. Within four hours he had written *The Scouts of the Plains*, and had the hotel bell-hops copying the parts, while he went out and picked up ten actors to play Indian.

When the manuscripts were handed out, Jack said, "Bill, how long will it take you to commit your part?"

"About seven years, if I have good luck," said Cody. It was his proud boast, however, that the next morning he recited the lines, cues and all. Buntline was to appear in the part of Cale Durg, an old trapper, but had written no lines for himself, trusting to his ability to extemporize and indeed expecting that he would have to do so.

On the scheduled night, December 16, 1872, the curtain rose on the début of Buffalo Bill. He was resplendent in buckskins, and utterly speechless. Buntline threw him a line: "Where have you been lately, Bill?"

Cody was just conscious enough to notice in the packed house a well-known Chicago man whom he had lately been guiding.

"I have been out on a hunt with Milligan," he said.

The local allusion pleased the audience; desperately Buntline went on, "Well, Bill, tell us all about the hunt."

"I told the story in a very funny way," said Cody later, "and it took like wild fire with the audience."

With this respite, Buntline whispered to the stage-manager to send on the Indians. Forth from the wings poured a yelling gang of supers in war-paint and feathers.

"The Indians are upon us!" shouted Buntline.

"Now this was pie for Jack and I," says Cody's story, "and we went at those bogus Indians red hot until we

had killed the last one and the curtain went down amid a tremendous applause. The other actors never got a chance to appear in the first act."

In the second act the Indians reappeared and were killed again. So the play went on to a triumphant conclusion. During the entire performance neither Texas Jack nor Buffalo Bill spoke a line of his original part.

Mrs. Cody's impression of the show, as she saw it a week later in St. Louis, was highly personal:

"I was sitting in the third row, and Will saw me. He came forward, leaned over the gas footlights, and waved his arms.

" 'Oh, Mamma!' he shouted, 'I'm a bad actor!' The house roared. Will threw me a kiss. . . .

"And after that, when I went to see my husband in his new rôle as actor, I chose a seat in the farthest and darkest part of the house. But it did little good. For invariably Will would seek me out, and invariably he would call: 'Hello, Mamma. Oh, but I'm a bad actor!' "

The reviewers were kind to the actors. Of the author they said that they had heard he had written the play in four hours, and they wondered why it took so long.

Established as a hit, however, *The Scouts of the Plains* went on a tour. So began the life of a trouper. The man who had sat the saddle from fort to fort now sprawled on the dusty seats of railway cars that bore him from one roaring city to another. He who had slept in tents and dugouts and caves and rolled in a blanket on the open prairie, learned the stuffiness of hotel bedrooms, rickety theaters and tiny dressing-rooms—new superstitions, new tricks, new habits of sleep and rising and eating and spending leisure. The old manners of canteen and dance-hall gave way to the new manners of gilded saloon and ornamented ball-room.

There was a special excitement in being arrested in St. Louis on Christmas Day, nine days after beginning his stage career. An old indictment hung over Buntline for having participated in a riot in the streets of St. Louis twenty years earlier. An energetic prosecutor, noting that Buntline and his troupe were playing at the Grand Opera House, swore out warrants and for good measure took into custody both Buffalo Bill and Texas Jack. Nothing came of it, except some good publicity, and the tour continued.

Renamed *Scouts of the Prairies*, the show reached New York and opened at Niblo's Garden on March 31, 1873. By this time Cody had acquired stage presence, if we may judge from this review in the *New York Times*:

"We have to say of the Hon. W. F. Cody that he exhibited, on his first appearance before a metropolitan audience, a surprising degree of *aplomb*, notable ease of gesture and delivery and vocal power quite sufficient readily to fill a large theater. . . . His use of the revolver and rifle indicate extensive practice, and were vastly relished by the audience. . . .

"Unmitigated bloodshed ends every act and almost every scene of this unique composition. . . . The characters are always either fighting or getting ready to fight. Most of them seem to be shot down in the course of the action, and come miraculously to life again in the sequel, to the infinite satisfaction of the audience. The temperance lecture introduced by Mr. Ned Buntline in act second, is calculated to do a great deal of good, and we hope it will. . . . It is only just to say that the representation was attended by torrents of what seemed thoroughly spontaneous applause; and that whatever faults close criticism may detect, there is a certain flavor

of realism and of nationality about the play well calculated to gratify a general audience."

General audiences were amply gratified. No longer was Buffalo Bill a far-off legendary hero, visible only to rich hunters. Here and now, in the full glare of the spotlight, he stalked before the delighted eyes of the humble folk who devoured the dime novels. They responded by making the first season so much a success that Cody received about six thousand dollars.

This was even more than he had made killing buffalo. Still he was disappointed. He thought that with the large houses he had drawn he should have more. Whether for this or another reason, he broke with the man who in the past three years had altered the scheme of his existence. He and Texas Jack decided to organize a company of their own, without Buntline.

They would get Wild Bill to join them, for his name was still greater than their own. For management they had discovered the talents of Major John M. Burke, most resourceful of press agents and smoothest of fixers.

Of all Buntline's services to Cody, perhaps the greatest was in bringing him and Burke together. Although he later wore his hair long like Cody's, and sported the nickname "Arizona John," Burke hailed from the District of Columbia. He had been a stock-company actor, manager of an acrobatic troupe traveling under canvas, dramatic critic and city editor of small newspapers. Good friends said that he had "nothing but brass and wind as a stock in trade," backed by tremendous popularity in every newspaper, railway and theatrical office. Indians seemed to like him better than other white men, and he was a welcome visitor at the reservations.

One night in his first season with Cody, Burke said solemnly: "I have met a god and a goddess in my life."

The goddess was Mlle. Morlacchi, a black-eyed dancer in the company who was billed as "Pale Dove." Burke had managed her. Gossip said that both he and Texas Jack fell in love with her. Against the handsome scout, the fat press agent had no chance. Burke consoled himself by worshipping the god, Bill Cody.

He remembered fondly their first meeting: "I came upon him just at sunset one night, out on the Missouri, and the reflection of the light from the river was shining up straight into his face and lighting it up like some kind of an aura. He was on horseback, and I thought then that he was the handsomest, straightest, finest man that I had ever seen in my life. I still think so."

For forty-four years he continued to think so. No other man gave Cody such long and unbroken loyalty. One after another, colleagues who helped to lift Buffalo Bill higher in fame, dropped away or were dropped. There were just a few who were faithful to him, and he to them. Among these few was John Burke. Year after year he made the rounds of the newspaper offices, turned out books and articles and interviews, replied to slander and set new fictions going to enhance the glory of his god.

When the Wild West Show had reached its zenith, David A. Curtis wrote a tribute to Burke, in which he said: "I have called Jack a good man, and I shall not apologize for the word, yet he has none of the small virtues. Whatever of goodness he has lies in essential traits, not in the small conventionalities. You cannot think of him as punctual, for instance, or as prudent or economical, or decorously and exquisitely choice of speech, or punctilious in any of those small niceties that make the Puritan and the prig. But when it comes

to cardinal points of character the liveliest imagination cannot conceive of John M. Burke as derelict in the smallest particular.

"Is the endorsement of the government necessary, or some special privilege in regard to the wards of the Nation? Burke secures it. Is it desirable to obtain a notice from a newspaper, whether it be the London Times or the Podunk Gazette? Burke sees the editor.

"He is a press agent, but it is hard to apply the word to him, for there is no other press agent of his kind. I doubt if he has written a notice in years. He does not need to. What he can do, and does, is to inspire enthusiasm in the minds of those who do write, or rather, to infuse them with some of his own, and in this he never fails. One reason is that he never suggests anything that is not more than well worth writing."

With Burke as manager, Cody opened his second season in New York. It had been hard to persuade Wild Bill to join the troupe. He held that play-acting was merely a way of making a fool of oneself. Tired of his responsibilities at Hays, he had moved to Kansas City, and had settled down to a life of serious gambling. But the salary which Cody offered was too large to resist. Bill appeared at the Brevoort Hotel in New York attired in tailored coat, fancy trousers and vest, fluffy shirt and boots with high heels. He celebrated his arrival by beating up a cabby who overcharged him.

"He was not an easy man to handle," said Cody. Nothing about the life and laws of the stage came within the range of Wild Bill's experience. Burke liked to tell how Bill got so exasperated when the spotlight followed him about the stage that he pulled his gun, took careful aim at the lamp in the distant gallery and quenched it with one bullet. At other times the story

ran that Bill craved the spotlight and for a joke Cody charged him a fee of two dollars for the privilege of basking in its rays.

When the whisky bottle passed round in a camp-fire scene, he took a great gulp, only to find that the property men had filled it with cold tea. Bill spat the hated stuff out on the stage and shouted, to the delight of the audience, "This don't count. I can't tell a story under the temptation unless I get real whisky."

"Quite frequently in our sham battles," Cody said, "he would run up to the Indians (supers) and putting his pistol close to their legs fire and burn them with the powder instead of shooting over their heads. This would make them dance and jump so that it was difficult to make them fall and die—although they were paid twenty-five cents each performance for the dying business." At last Cody had to tell him that he must cease this playful practise or leave the company. Wild Bill went to his dressing-room, took off his buckskins and disappeared, requesting the stage carpenter to "tell that long-haired son-of-a-gun I have no more use for him and his damned show business."

They hunted him up and tried to smooth it over, but Wild Bill was through. He had done much to shape the character of the real Will Cody. He could not adapt himself to the new character of Buffalo Bill. As he put it, "I've dropped on the trail for the West."

At the end of his second season Cody boasted that he now "had money to throw to the birds." But when a wealthy Englishman offered him a thousand dollars a month to guide a hunting party he accepted with alacrity. Later in the summer he was employed as guide for a detachment of cavalry under Colonel Anson Mills, in the Big Horn Country.

Though the plains had been peaceful for five years, there were rumblings of Indian trouble in the mountains. Hostile bands still sulked and stayed off the reservations. In that year, 1874, the white man broke faith again. Gold had been struck in the Black Hills. Although under the treaties these hills—"the haunted Sinais of the Sioux"—were sacred to the Indian, the gold-fever was as irresistible as ever. Miners swarmed in. The Sioux met them with angry threats. Custer, sent to intimidate the tribes, gave them food and presents and said, "We are not here to molest you." He came back reporting, "I cannot blame the poor savages."

The expedition with Mills took Cody over familiar trails. And in the mountains he now encountered an old friend. One day, as the troops rested on the great divide, they saw a lone horseman approaching. When he came closer, Cody recognized California Joe, the six-foot, red-haired, grizzled and bony trapper who had guided Custer on the Washita.

On this day, as Cody described him, "He was riding an old cayuse pony, with an old saddle, a very old bridle, and a pair of elk-skin hobbles attached to his saddle, to which also hung a piece of elk-meat. He carried an old Hawkins rifle. He had an old shabby army hat on, and a ragged blue army overcoat, a buckskin shirt, and a pair of dilapidated greasy buckskin pants that reached only a little below his knees, having shrunk in the wet; he also wore a pair of old army government boots with the soles worn off."

The young officers crowded round to question the veteran scout. Colonel Mills asked if he had prospered. His answer made a deep impression upon Cody. "He pointed to the old cayuse pony, his gun, and his clothes, and replied, '*This is seventy years' gathering.*'"

Perhaps it was this revelation that made Cody decide to quit the West. For when the expedition returned, he said good-by to Fort McPherson and moved his family to Rochester, New York.

His city-bred wife appreciated the return to urban comfort, especially as her husband was almost continuously on the road. In the following season he had a play by Hiram Robbins, called *Scouts of the Plains, or Red Deviltry As It Is*. Texas Jack was absent with a hunting party in the Yellowstone, but the cast included one Kit Carson, Jr.

The rumblings in the mountains continued. Spending a quiet summer at Rochester, Cody heard that General Crook had been sent into the Black Hills to expel the miners in an effort to save the government's face. Custer City was founded in August and in two weeks had a population of six hundred. Crook cleared the town, but no sooner had his troops marched away than everybody came back.

Sitting Bull, the crafty medicine man, was counseling vengeance. Chiefs Crazy Horse and Gall were gathering forces. The agencies were still issuing arms and ammunition to the Indians, for hunting use.

During the next winter, as Cody traveled from theater to theater, letters began to come from Colonel Mills, saying that Crook was marching into the Black Hills in the spring and wanted him as guide.

At Springfield, Massachusetts, in April, a telegram was handed to him. His son was dying of scarlet fever. He played the first act, then left the theater in time to catch a train for Rochester.

His only son, Kit, was Cody's greatest pride. He had named him after one of the great heroes of his own

youth, Kit Carson. Only the other day he had had a photograph taken showing the six-year-old child posed with a little rifle.

Helen Cody Wetmore's book, which held no sentiment too private for publicity, told on the very page which described Kit's death, the following absurd story:

"Gypsies had carried him away the previous summer. But Kit was the son of a scout, and his young eyes were sharp. He marked the trail followed by his captors, and at the first opportunity gave them the slip and got safely home, exclaiming as he toddled into the sobbing family circle, 'I tumed back adain, mama; don't cry.'"

Helen also said that the father had hoped that Kit would grow up to fulfill the fortune teller's prophecy and become president of the United States.

There was no such cheap rubbish in Cody's own account of the boy's death. That page of his autobiography throbs with honest sorrow. When he reached home the boy was unable to speak to him and in the evening Kit died in his arms.

Always tender and deeply emotional, the man who had seen many die on the field was shaken as never before. He could not think of going back to the theater. Fortunately for him there were the Black Hills and the angry Sioux. He closed his season and started west.

At military headquarters in Chicago he learned that the old Fifth had come back, after five years in the rocks and deserts of Arizona, to join the row. General Carr had written that he wanted Cody as chief of scouts.

He hurried to Cheyenne, where the Fifth was encamped. As he rode in, the officers shouted, "Here's Buffalo Bill," and the soldiers sent up three cheers.

CHAPTER XV

THE FIRST SCALP FOR CUSTER

SUDDENLY the troops learned that they were in for something more than a summer frolic. Custer and his entire command were wiped out on the Little Big Horn. In that tragic ambush not a white man escaped. Only Curley, a Crow scout, lived to tell the tale.

It had been supposed that none of the hostile bands held more than eight hundred warriors. But there were nearly three thousand in the avalanche that swept down on Custer, with Crazy Horse at their head yelling, "Come on, Dakotas! There was never a better day to die!"

"There is going to be the damndest Indian war ever known," Cody telegraphed to the *New York Herald*. "No man can say when it is going to end. The Indians have thus far whipped every command they have met." But the slaughter of Custer was to be the last victory of the Indian race.

Custer's rashness, his critics said, had killed him at last; he had walked into a trap. During the many years through which the controversy raged, Cody's publicity took full advantage of it. A sketch of Cody's life, appended to one of his own books, made the bland comment, "It is safe to say that if General Custer had had him with him, the frightful massacre of Little Big Horn would never have occurred," and considering Cody's skill as a guide this was quite conceivable. When the Custer fight was reproduced in the Wild West Show, Cody's part was to come riding on the scene to find

every man lying dead, while a screen flashed the words, "Too late!"*

News of the disaster reached the Fifth Cavalry while it was in the field, scouting on the trails between the agencies and the Black Hills. On the same day scouts came in with the warning that eight hundred Cheyenne were leaving the Red Cloud reservation.

Over what General Sheridan described as an almost totally unknown region of about ninety thousand square miles, the Sioux and their allies were supreme and aflame with hatred. There were twenty-nine thousand well-armed Indians at large in a country in which they knew every canyon and ford.

To cut off the Cheyenne, who were riding to join Sitting Bull, the Fifth must beat them to the strategic point where the plains meet the timber and the rocky bluffs. Colonel Merritt had to march his seven companies of cavalry eighty miles before the Indians could go thirty. He did it, and straddled the Indian trail at the crossing of Hat Creek.

At daybreak on July seventeenth, Cody and Colonel Merritt lay hidden on an outpost behind a bill. Above, on the ridge, the first Cheyenne war parties were in sight. Three miles to the south the wagon-train, laden with infantry, was coming up. Well ahead of the wagons rode two dispatch-bearers. They did not see the Indians. The Indians could see them, but could not see the cavalry drawn up below the butte.

A small party of braves galloped up the ravine to attack the two riders. Cody rushed back to camp, got together fifteen men, rode down the bluff and started a

*Only by a narrow chance, according to Frank J. Wiltach, did Wild Bill Hickok miss being the guide of the Custer expedition; Custer had telegraphed for him but the message failed to find him.

running fight. The main body of Indians swarmed to the rescue. It was a surprise attack.

There was a lull. A young chief, Yellow Hand, rode out in front of the Indian line, shouting, "I know you, Pahaska. If you want to fight, come ahead and fight me!"

Thus began the famous duel which an eye-witness, Captain Charles King, accounted "as plucky a single combat on both sides as is ever witnessed."

It was not strange that the enemy picked on Buffalo Bill. The luxuriant hair which gave him the Indian nickname, Pahaska, was not peculiar to himself. But Cody was otherwise conspicuous that day. His comrades wore buckskin, corduroy or flannel so indiscriminately that officers and privates could hardly be told apart. Cody went into that fray all dressed up in one of his stage costumes—a handsome Mexican suit of black velvet, slashed with scarlet and trimmed with silver buttons and lace. Why he should be wearing such regalia, far in the hills, at dawn, after an eighty-mile ride, when the regiment was in its working clothes, is impossible to explain, except as studied showmanship.

His own account of the duel is quotable:

"The chief was riding his horse back and forth in front of his men, as if to banter me, and I concluded to accept the challenge. I galloped towards him for fifty yards and he advanced towards me about the same distance, both of us riding at full speed, and then, when we were only thirty yards apart, I raised my rifle and fired; his horse fell to the ground, having been killed by my bullet. Almost at the same instant my own horse went down, he having stepped into a gopher hole. The fall did not hurt me much, and I instantly sprang to my feet. The Indian had also recovered himself,

and we were now both on foot, and not more than twenty paces apart. We fired at each other simultaneously. My usual luck did not desert me on this occasion, for his bullet missed me, while mine struck him in the breast. He reeled and fell but before he had fairly touched the ground I was upon him, knife in hand, and had driven the keen-edged weapon to its hilt in his heart. Jerking his war-bonnet off I scientifically scalped him in about five seconds.

"The whole affair from beginning to end occupied but little time, and the Indians, seeing that I was some little distance from my company, now came charging down upon me from a hill, in hopes of cutting me off. General Merritt had witnessed the duel, and realizing the danger I was in, ordered Colonel Mason with Company K to hurry to my rescue. The order came none too soon, for had it been given one minute later I would have had not less than two hundred Indians upon me. As the soldiers came up I swung the Indian chieftain's top-knot and bonnet in the air and shouted:—

"'The first scalp for Custer.'"

Sergeant James Richardson used to tell how the blood from the scalp spattered his face as Cody waved it.

In the chase which followed, the Cheyenne were driven back to the reservation. There were no casualties. All the glory of the skirmish belonged to Cody, and he got it in plenty. Newspaper men put the story on the wire; it was good for nearly a column in the *New York Herald*. It is, in fact, the only one of his Indian-slaying exploits of which we have a contemporary account.

Sergeant Jacob Blaut thought that he himself might have killed Yellow Hand. "Bill and I fired at the same time," he said, "and I think my bullet killed him."

On the 17th of July.



DEATH OF YELLOW HAND—CODY'S FIRST SCALP FOR CUSTER.

Drawing from a Beadle novel, as reproduced in an early program of the Wild West Show. The Yellow Hand scalp and bowie knife were exhibited for many years



Johnny Baker, "the Cowboy Kid"

THE FIRST SCALP FOR CUSTER

King and Richardson, both of whom saw the fight, agreed in stating that it was Cody's second bullet that killed the Indian. Richardson added that after firing the fatal shot at fifty yards' range, Cody remounted and rode forward to take the scalp.

But Cody himself always claimed that he gave the death blow with a heavy bowie-knife, which he kept on exhibition. He told his wife that he had lost his gun in falling from his horse. Johnny Baker, his foster son, confirms this, pointing out that no one thrown from a horse will hold anything in his hands. Cody told Baker that Yellow Hand was pinned down by his own horse, which had fallen on his leg, that Cody himself had been riding so fast that he found himself upon the Indian before he knew it, and that Yellow Hand tried an overhand blow with his tomahawk, which gave Cody a tiny nick on the back of the head.

Yellow Hand, like Cody, had gone into the fight in full panoply. He wore a beautiful war-bonnet and all the decorations and ornaments of a proud young chief. Cody carefully collected these, as well as the arms and shield of his victim, and made good use of them later. The scalp he carried in his pocket so long that one officer offered him fifty dollars to get rid of it. Sergeant Richardson remembered riding beside him and begging him to move round so that the wind would blow in the other direction.

Finally he put it into a box and sent it to his wife at Rochester, to her utter disgust. "Will Cody," she said, when he got home, "don't you ever send me another Indian scalp as long as you live."

"I'll do better than that," he promised. "I'll never scalp another Injun!"

And he never did. That duel and a little scouting

were the sum total of Cody's services in the Sioux War of 1876.

It was a poignant coincidence that only two weeks after Cody killed his last Indian, Wild Bill Hickok was shot dead in a saloon at Deadwood, barely a hundred miles away.

Deadwood was the raw, roaring capital of the Black Hills mining camps. Founded in April, a crooked row of cabins along a gulch ghostly with dead trees, it had grown to ten thousand in two months. Reviving all the old traditions of mining camps, it made itself the wildest, most lawless and most bewhiskered mining camp in history. Gamblers, gunmen and outlaws surged in with the prospectors and traders. Carousing with them from one saloon to another was that stout harlot, Calamity Jane, who boasted that she never went to bed sober or with a penny in her pocket. Doc Pierce, the busy undertaker, said, "Deadwood was then hog-wild; duels and gunfights in the streets, and often one had to duck or fall flat on the ground to escape a shower of lead."

The first stage-coach into Deadwood was driven by Richard Clark, known in the dime novels as Deadwood Dick. An inquisitive visitor during the fiftieth anniversary celebration in 1926 found Deadwood Dick still there, and asked him: "How many men did you kill? How many stage holdups were you in? How many times did Indians attack your party and scalp all but you? How many times was your life saved only by the swiftness of your horse or the sureness of your trusty weapon?"

Deadwood Dick listened patiently and then replied, "Not one." And to complete the disillusionment, he added impressively, "I tell the truth."

Among those who came to Deadwood was, of course,

Wild Bill. As he reached the top of the divide and looked down on the raw town, he turned to Colorado Charlie and said, "I have a hunch that I am in my last camp and will never leave this gulch alive."

And one afternoon, in Carl Mann's saloon, he was sitting in a game when drunken Jack McCall crept up behind him, poked a 45-caliber Colt's close to his ear and fired once. Asked on the witness stand why he didn't go round front and shoot Bill in the face like a man, McCall said with simple candor, "I didn't want to commit suicide."

When Doc Pierce came to take charge of the remains, he found the fingers still crooked as they had held the cards—or perhaps instinctively as if to pull the trigger that had never before failed him. The cards strewn on the floor showed aces and eights. "Since that day," said Doc, "aces and eights have been known as the 'dead man's hand' in the western country." The undertaker also said, "I have seen many dead men on the field of battle and in civil life, but Wild Bill was the prettiest corpse I have ever seen. His long mustache was attractive, even in death, and his long tapering fingers looked like marble." They buried his Sharps rifle in the coffin with him and carved on a stump at the head of his grave:

A brave man, the victim of an assassin,
J. B. Hickok (Wild Bill) age 39 years;
murdered by Jack McCall Aug. 2, 1876.

So the fighting days of two old friends ended at almost the same moment of time, and in the same rugged country. But how differently! Wild Bill went to his grave, while Buffalo Bill, to whom he had taught the

lore of the plains, whom he had made a scout in his own likeness, went on to greater honors.

Wild Bill had had the same chance for fame and fortune that Cody had. He was as good a scout, a better shot, a greater fighter. His genuine adventures were more spectacular and he had the earlier start in publicity. But handsome as he was, he did not have the look of a hero, as Cody did. He scorned the opportunities which Cody seized. He was stubborn where Cody was pliant. He wouldn't be managed; Cody would.

Six weeks after his duel with Yellow Hand, Cody was off by steamer down the Yellowstone.

The weather was fearfully hot. The regiment had marched back and forth, with little action. Cody had carried dispatches and had done some guiding. By September the command, now united with that of General Terry, began to suffer from short rations and pitiless storms, and just before Cody left, the camp was swept by a deluge of rain. John Finerty, the war correspondent, said: "Buffalo Bill, who had theatrical engagements in the East, and three newspaper correspondents, who did not relish so much water on the outside, forsook us."

Cody telegraphed that he was coming home because his services were no longer needed, declaring "the Indians are tired of fighting." Later he said: "There being but little prospect of any more fighting, I determined to go east as soon as possible to organize a new dramatic combination, and have a new drama written for me based on the Sioux War. This I knew would be a paying investment as the Sioux campaign had excited considerable interest."

It was being currently reported that the fall campaign would be full of hardships. While Sitting Bull escaped

THE FIRST SCALP FOR CUSTER

over the Canadian border, Crazy Horse hid in the Black Hills. The regiment went on. Before it got into winter quarters, two months later, it saw some fighting and was half starved. General Miles with the infantry kept up active operations until the middle of February, in a temperature which he described as "simply appalling"; his thermometer froze solid at something more than fifty degrees below zero. It was not until a year later that General Sheridan was able to report, "The Sioux War is now over." The result of it, of course, was that the Indians ceded all titles to land in the Black Hills.

Meanwhile, Cody was touring the East, making great capital of his brief service during the summer. The feathered head-dress, arms and ornaments which he had stripped from the body of Yellow Hand were not only used on the stage, but in each city were displayed in some prominent window. When he reached New England, the press and the clergy set up a mighty protest against "the blood-stained trophies of his murderous and cowardly deeds," and thereafter he did not exhibit them.

The drama was billed as follows:

First appearance since his return
from the Indian Wars
Buffalo Bill Combination
(Hon. W. F. Cody)
Supported by Capt. Jack,
The Poet Scout of the Black Hills
In the new drama founded on inci-
dents in the late Indian War
entitled
The Red Right Hand
or
Buffalo Bill's First Scalp for Custer.

"Captain Jack" was not Texas Jack, who had been his support in former seasons. Once again Cody had come to the parting of the ways with an old associate, the man who had first trod the boards with him. On the day when Cody left the troops on the Yellowstone he had met Texas Jack going out to join up with the army, in the employ of the *New York Herald*, for which paper he scouted, carried dispatches and wrote occasionally during the fall campaign.*

The new pard, "Captain Jack" Crawford, wore his hair long and grew a goatee and mustache which gave him a striking resemblance to Buffalo Bill. Crawford became one of Cody's rivals in Wild West shows and on the stage. It was he who insisted that Cody had never killed an Indian.

He had gone into the Black Hills as a correspondent for the *Omaha Bee* and had been a scout under the leadership of Cody, who said, "Jack was a tenderfoot at that time, having lately come to that country. But he had abundant pluck and courage."

Besides being a poet, Jack Crawford had the distinction among scouts of being a teetotaler. An interviewer once wrote of him: "We looked at the man, with his long flowing hair, reaching far down on his shoulders, wearing a broad-brimmed hat, a wildly fringed buckskin overcoat, blue shirt and light silk necktie, more nearly representing in appearance an ideal old-school Spanish cavalier than the writer of such sweet lines.

"'Let us take a drink, Captain.'

"'No, I thank you. I never drink, but I will recite you a poem entitled *Mother's Prayers*.'

*Texas Jack and Cody met again round a camp-fire the next spring. This may have been their last meeting, for Texas Jack did not return to the stage. He died in 1880.

"Mother who in days of childhood,
 Prayed as only mothers pray;
 'Keep him in the narrow pathway,
 Let him not be led astray;'
 And when danger hovered o'er me,
 And when life was full of cares,
 Then a sweet form passed before me,
 And I thought of Mother's prayers."

When Jack had arrived with a letter from General Sheridan showing his appointment as a scout, he had announced that he had also brought Cody a present from General Jones.

" 'What kind of a present?' I inquired, seeing no indication of any package about Jack.

" 'A bottle of whisky!' he almost shouted. . . .

"I will say in passing that I don't believe there is another scout in the West that would have brought a full bottle of whisky three hundred miles. But Jack was 'bone dry.' As Crawford refused to join me, and I was never a lone drinker, I invited General Carr over to sample the bottle."

There was another scout who did not drink, another old friend and follower of Cody. That was Jim White, otherwise known as Buffalo Chips. Cody had befriended White when he was ill and without money, and he in turn was said to have saved Cody's life at least once.

Captain King said of him: "The hero worship of extreme youth was simply intensified in the man. He copied Bill's dress, his gait, his carriage, his speech—everything he could copy; he let his long yellow hair fall low upon his shoulders in wistful imitation of Bill's glossy brown curls. He took more care of Bill's gun and horses than he did of his own." For this reason General

Sheridan had given him the nickname "Buffalo Chips"; intended in jest, it was eagerly accepted by White as complimentary.

Buffalo Chips served under his hero during the summer of 1876. Two weeks after Cody left, Buffalo Chips was killed. It happened during a raid on Crazy Horse's village at Slim Butte, which Captain King described:

"As I was running over from the western side, I caught sight of 'Chips' on the opposite crest. All alone, he was cautiously making his way, on hands and knees, towards the head of the ravine, where he could look down upon the Indians beneath. As yet he was protected from their fire by the bank itself—his lean form distinctly outlined against the eastern sky. He reached a stunted tree that grew on the very edge of the gorge, and there he halted, brought his rifle close under his shoulder, in readiness to aim, and then raised himself slowly to his feet, lifted his head higher, higher, as he peered over. Suddenly a quick, eager light shone in his face, a sharp movement of his rifle, as though he were about to raise it to his shoulder, when, bang!—a puff of white smoke floated up from the head of the ravine, 'Chips' sprang convulsively in the air, clasping his hands to his breast, and with one startled, agonizing cry, 'Oh my God, boys!' plunged heavily forward, on his face, down the slope—shot through the heart."

The Buffalo Bill books in his later years tinged this incident with romance: "Poor old White! A more faithful man never took a trail, nor a braver. He was a credit to me, and to the name which General Sheridan had first given him in derision, but which afterwards became an honor, the name of 'Buffalo Chips.'

"I had given White an old red-lined coat, one which I had worn conspicuously in a number of battles, and

which the Indians had marked as a special target on that account. . . . The coat had caught the attention of the savages, and thus I had been the innocent means of my friend's death; for, with the soldiers pressing them so hard, it is not likely that any of the warriors would have wasted a shot had they not thought they were getting Pa-ho-has-ka. For a long time the Indians believed that I would be a menace to them no more forever. But they discovered their mistake later, and I sent a good many of them to the happy hunting-grounds as a sort of tribute to my friend."

Here again the collaborator overstepped the bounds. Cody did not send a single Indian to the happy hunting-grounds in revenge for the death of Buffalo Chips. They had said good-by two weeks earlier and Cody certainly never killed another Indian.

Effort was made to give the impression that Cody's absence at the time of the Slim Butte fight was merely temporary. Parallel columns best show the misquotation:

From *Campaigning with Crook*, a book about the Sioux Campaign of 1876, written by Captain Charles King:

"Poor honest-hearted 'Chips'! His story was a brief one after that episode. We launched out from Laramie on the 22nd of June, and through all the vicissitudes of the campaign that followed, he was

From *True Tales of the Plains*, by W. F. Cody, purporting to be an exact quotation from "General" Charles King:

"Poor, honest-hearted 'Chips'! His story was a brief one after we had launched out from where Cody left us to carry some despatches for Terry. 'Chips' remained in his capacity as scout, though he

always near the Fifth. On the Yellowstone Cody was compelled to bid us a reluctant farewell. He had theatrical engagements to meet in the fall, and about the end of August he started on General Terry's boat for Fort Buford and the States. 'Chips' remained in his capacity as scout, though he seemed sorely to miss his 'pardner.'

"It was just two weeks after that we struck the Sioux at Slim Buttes."

seemed sorely to miss his 'pardner,' whose last caution was: 'Jim, now don't be rash!'

"It was just two weeks after that we struck the Sioux at Slim Butte."

This particular violation of the records did not occur until 1908, when Cody was old and his slipping hold upon the public had to be strengthened by every possible device. But the boldness of all his subsequent publicity dates from the Sioux War of 1876.

The "first scalp for Custer" was also the first trophy for John Burke. From that day the publicity of Buffalo Bill began to display real genius. Burke ceased to be an ordinary press agent and began to mold a gigantic figure. Bill Cody ceased to be a genuine scout who was incidentally appearing in melodrama. He became a professional player, whose every movement must be directed by a showman's hand and whose past career must be overhauled to make a showman's tradition.

Since the duel with Yellow Hand was his last appearance on the fighting stage, it is pertinent here to review the record upon which his fame was built. There were

nine major items, exclusive of those which are obvious fictions:

1. The killing of his first Indian at the age of twelve. There is no confirmation of this and there is strong suspicion that it never occurred.

2. His pony express riding, particularly his achievement in making the longest continuous trip. Although he was only fourteen at the time, and his own stories are much confused as to dates, there is some reason to believe that the record was genuine. It was accepted by historians of the pony express and by Alexander Majors, one of the owners, although Majors referred to Cody as "the office boy on horse-back," and Connelley is convinced that Cody rode with the mail only between Fort Leavenworth and St. Joseph.

3. His service in the Civil War. This was brief and uneventful, and for much of the time he was a hospital orderly.

4. His skill in buffalo hunting. This was authentic. Many who hunted with him testified to it, and although no contemporary account has been found of the number of buffalo he killed for the railroad, or of his contest with Billy Comstock, newspapers at the time were referring to him as "the noted guide."

5. His remarkable feat of endurance in carrying dispatches for Sheridan. This is precisely described in Sheridan's memoirs.

6. His expertness in guiding, particularly in locating Penrose's camp after the blizzard in 1868. General Carr's testimony is clear on this point.

7. The killing of Tall Bull, at the Battle of Summit Springs. This is sadly in doubt.

8. Participation with detachments of cavalry in a number of small engagements. Various officers have written of these, and we have the citation describing the one in which he won a Congressional Medal.

9. The duel with Yellow Hand. This was described by eye-witnesses and reported in the newspapers.

It was a worthy record, and it was fortified by Cody's popularity with the army officers, by his personal charm and by his good looks. Burke set himself the task of enlarging it to match the careers of Boone and Frémont and Carson. The comparison was not easy.

No single act of Cody had been of prime importance in the pioneering of the West. Other men were already recognized as the greater pony express riders, greater scouts, greater gun-fighters, greater soldiers. Even the tremendous buffalo slaughter which gave him his nickname was done, not for the transcontinental railroad, but for a secondary line. His dispatch-riding and guiding, brilliant as they had been, did not happen to have been connected with any major military operation. As luck would have it, he had missed all of the fights which live in history—the Sand Creek and Fetterman massacres, the gallant defense made by Forsyth's scouts, the raid on the Washita, the Custer debacle. His one battle of any significance was Summit Springs and his share in this, as we have seen, is hard to assess. The duel with Yellow Hand has been magnified as the stroke which broke the back of the Sioux uprising, but judged by military standards, it was only an incident in a skirmish.

For publicity purposes, the duel was his most spectacular and timely exploit. He went into it garbed in that astonishing costume of velvet and scarlet and silver. He

took the scalp before plenty of witnesses. And not far away were the faithful Burke and war correspondents eager to put a good story on the wires.

This done, Buffalo Bill need not endure the rigors of a long campaign. Within a few weeks he returned laden with trophies and honors, and with a new drama. "It was without head or tail," he said, "and it made no difference at which act we commenced the performance. . . . It afforded us, however, ample opportunity to give a noisy, rattling, gunpowder entertainment."

He extended his tour even to the Pacific Coast, which being still conscious of its own recent turbulence, was not supposed to care for wild western entertainment. Everywhere he played to crowded houses. It was the most successful season he had ever known.

It ended unhappily in a quarrel with his wife. She met him at Omaha, where he was disbanding his company. At the hotel she objected, as he put it himself, to the manner in which he bade good-by to some of the actresses. Jealous and angry, she refused to live with him, and he went back to the plains for a summer with the cattle men.

CHAPTER XVI

THE BIRTH OF THE SHOW

WITH money to invest, Cody was looking to the West again. Now that the buffalo and the roving Indians were gone, the cattle business was spreading over the plains. In partnership with Major Frank North, he bought, in 1877, a ranch and range on the head of the South Dismal River in Nebraska, and the CN brand was established.

That summer, during the estrangement from his wife, he helped to buy, brand and drive his herds to the range.

Cow-punching was new to Cody. Except as proprietor he never took kindly to it, for even at thirty-one he was getting soft. The hard knocks of the cowboy's trade were described in an article signed by Texas Jack which was reprinted in the early programs of the Wild West Show and which is worthy of preservation:

"Before being counted in and fully endorsed, the candidate has had to become an expert horseman, and test the many eccentricities of the stubborn mustang; enjoy the beauties, learn to catch, throw, fondle—oh! yes, gently fondle (but not from behind)—and ride the 'docile' little Spanish-American plug, an amusing experience in itself, in which you are taught all the mysteries of rear and tare, stop and drop, lay and roll, kick and bite, on and off, under and over, heads and tails, handsprings, triple somersaults, standing on your head, diving, flip-flaps, getting left (horse leaving you fifteen miles from camp—Indians in the neighborhood, etc.) and all the funny business included in the familiar term of 'bucking'; then

learn to handle a rope, catch a calf, stop a crazy cow, throw a beef steer, play with a wild bull, lasso an untamed mustang, and daily endure the dangers of a Spanish matador, with a little Indian scrap thrown in, and if there is anything left of you they'll christen it a first-class cowboy. . . . Immense herds, as high as thirty thousand or more in number, are moved by single owners, but are driven in bands of one to three thousand, which, when under way, are designated 'herds.' Each of these have from ten to fifteen men, with a wagon driver and cook, and the 'king-pin of the outfit,' the boss, with a supply of two or three ponies to a man, an ox team, and blankets; also jerked beef and corn meal—the staple food. They are also furnished with mavericks or 'doubtless-owned' yearlings for the fresh meat supply. After getting fully under way, and the cattle broke in, from ten to fifteen miles a day is the average, and everything is plain sailing, in fair weather. As night comes on the cattle are rounded up in a small compass, and held until they lie down, when two men are left on watch, riding round and round them in opposite directions, singing or whistling all the time, for two hours, that being the length of each watch. . . .

"But on nights when 'Old Prob.' goes on a spree, leaves the bung out of his water barrel above, prowls around with his flash box, raising a breeze, whispering in tones of thunder, and the cowboy's voice, like the rest of the outfit, is drowned out, steer clear and prepare for action. If them quadrupeds don't go insane, turn tail to the storm, and strike out for civil and religious liberty, then I don't know what 'strike out' means. Ordinarily so clumsy and stupid looking, a thousand beef steers can rise like a flock of quail on the roof of an exploding powder mill, and will scud away like a tumble weed be-

fore a high wind, with a noise like a receding earthquake. Then comes fun and frolic for the cowboys.

"Talk of 'Sheridan's ride, twenty miles away!' That was in the daytime, but this is the cowboy's ride with Texas five hundred miles away, and them steers steering straight for home; night time, darker than the word means, hog wallows, prairie dog, wolf, and badger holes, ravines and precipices ahead, and, if you do your duty, three thousand stampeding steers behind. If your horse don't swap ends, and you hang to them till daylight, you can bless your lucky stars. Many have passed in their checks at this game."

In his second summer as a cattleman Cody was persuaded to take part in the annual round-up, when all the neighboring ranchmen rode out to throw a great circle about the scattered herds and drive them in to be sorted. This struck him as pretty hard work. Six weeks in the saddle decided him that there was no fun about it, and thereafter he gladly left North to run the business.

He had plenty of other things with which to occupy his time.

The stage successes continued. The popularity of *Red Right Hand* had shown Cody and Burke the value of building melodramas upon recent spectacular events. They reproduced the Mountain Meadow Massacre. Although that Mormon outrage had occurred twenty years earlier, it was fresh in the public mind as a result of the long delayed trial of the chief villain, John D. Lee, and his dramatic execution in March, 1877, on the very scene of his villainy. The play, written by A. S. Burt, was called *May Cody, or Lost and Won*. Cody's sister, May, was the heroine. This was, he said, his first "artistic" production, and the most profitable.

Another advance in showmanship was the addition of

real Indians to the troupe. Hiring supers to play Indian at twenty-five cents a performance was cheap and easy, but it did not suit Burke's enlarging scheme. They went to the Red Cloud Agency and hired some Sioux. Mrs. Cody, reconciled to her husband again, decided that she would travel with him and keep an eye on him, and she found herself and her little daughter in company with several of his late enemies, now on his pay-roll.

Before the Yellow Hand duel, Buffalo Bill had begun to produce dime novels signed by himself. Of these his sister said: "Our author would never consent to write anything except actual scenes from border life. As a sop to the Cerberus of sensationalism, he did occasionally condescend to heighten his effects by exaggeration. In sending one story to the publisher he wrote:

"I am sorry to have to lie so outrageously in this yarn. My hero has killed more Indians on one war-trail than I have killed in all my life. But I understand this is what is expected in border tales. If you think the revolver and bowie-knife are used too freely, you may cut out a fatal shot or stab wherever you deem it wise."

"Even this story, which one accustomed to border life confessed to be exaggerated, fell far short of the sensational and blood-curdling tales usually written, and was published exactly as the author wrote it."

His first manuscript is said to have been destitute of punctuation and short of capitals. "Life is too short," he said, "to make big letters where small ones will do."

Leaving aside the question whether Burke or Prentiss Ingraham or somebody else actually wrote the novels signed by Cody, we may pause to admire the diction of this bit from *Death Trailers*:

"He hissed forth gloatingly: 'I've got yer ag'in, my beauty. Now I'll see that yer don't git away.'"

"But, suddenly, a dark shadow fell upon him; a grasp of iron was upon his throat, and he was bent backward as though a mere child.

"Then the rosy sunlight flashed upon a descending knife; there was a dull thud, a grating of steel against bone, and the ruffian was hurled back a dead man—slain by the hand of Death-Trailer.

"Then the scout turned toward the young girl. She was crouched upon the floor, her hands clasped, her eyes wildly gazing upon him.

"‘Oh, sir, from what have you not saved me!’ she gasped.

"‘From a devil in human form, it seems. Come, you are unnerved; take a swallow of this.’"

And this, from *Fancy Frank of Colorado*:

"‘Pard, I’ve got the drop on you so you may as well do as I say: take your hand off that pistol!’

"Dick Sanford sullenly obeyed, while he hissed forth:

"‘I’d like to know where you come from, and why you chip in where you’re not wanted.’

"‘You mistake, sir; I chip in wherever I can help the weaker party, and as to where I come from, I will answer you, and throw in my name gratis. Maybe you have heard of me: I’m called Fancy Frank of Colorado.’"

As an author Cody could well afford to glorify Fancy Frank and Death Trailer and other imaginary characters. He himself was passing out of the phase of mere fictional hero. He was a living hero, known wherever newspapers were read and footlights blazed.

The time had come to celebrate him in print that bore more semblance of truth than the dime novel. An auto-

biography was written. One need only contrast the style of this book with that of his letters to know that he could not have written it unaided. But the real Bill Cody is mirrored in its pages better than in any later writings that bore his name. Humor, candor, simplicity and a considerable degree of modesty made it more interesting and more nearly truthful than any of the later books. It was published in 1879 and was sold aggressively by canvassers.*

Burke let it be known that in seven years on the stage Cody had earned one hundred and thirty-five thousand dollars.

Now that they were prosperous Mrs. Cody, who had not liked her season of travel, was willing to go back west. The ranch was sixty-five miles north of the new town of North Platte, which had grown up not far from Fort McPherson. They bought a small farm on the outskirts of the town and built a house, very grand by contrast with the cabin they had left three years before.

They were received with open arms. The town was proud to have as a resident "the Honorable" William F. Cody. He was a big cattle owner, the handsomest and best-dressed man in town, a generous spender and a good fellow. He was, the local paper said after a few years' acquaintance, "the same every day friend, wears the same size hat, gives the same ready shake of hand and the same cordial greeting to his open-latched home, as he did in days of yore in the cabin of sod with its thatched roof." In time they gave his name to the band and the Grand Army Post and the local lodge of the Order of Red Men. "North Platte should be congratulated," said the paper

*In 1888 Cody brought it up to date; soon after his death in 1917 it was reissued in a memorial edition which is still being sold.

in 1883, "on the possession of a citizen whose prominence of position is not bounded by his township, his county or his state, but whose name is a household word, whose pictures are familiar to, and whose character is known, not only throughout the nation, but has adorned pages and interested the readers of foreign works and publications. We allude to our fellow citizen, Hon. W. F. Cody, whose sobriquet of Buffalo Bill represents a popularity only bounded by the area of American territory, and to which we, who live by his own fireside, may testify his worthy possession and to the modesty of its wearing." (The style of this extract is curiously like that of John Burke.)

There was a boy in North Platte who at the age of nine discovered that he was lucky enough to live in the very same town with Buffalo Bill. This boy was Johnny Baker, the son of Lew Baker, who had settled at O'Fallon's Bluffs as a pioneer in 1862. "Those were troublous times," Baker has said. "Three times the Indians drove my mother and father away from their home and set fire to the place. The Indians knocked my mother down in those fights, but somehow she escaped." Thus as a child Johnny had seen the last days of the Oregon Trail. As the programs of the Wild West Show said, it "impressed his mind, as well as directed his aspirations, to an emulation of the manly qualities necessary to be ranked a true American cowboy.

"When the pony express, the stage coach, and the wagon-trains were supplanted by the steam-horse, Baker's station became useless, and 'Old Lew' removed bag and baggage to North Platte, a little town of magical railroad growth. Here he built a fine house, which became the headquarters of the old timers, and many a tenderfoot can remember the thrilling incidents related of life on

the trail—a life that now belongs alone to history and to romance—while Old Lew dispensed hospitality like a prince. But the ways of city life, a too big heart, of which the 'shiftless, genial affinities' and rounders took due advantage, caused his former prosperity to be a remembrance only, and Johnny to work manfully, for one of his age, to lend a helping hand."

One day in the main street of North Platte, Johnny saw Buffalo Bill come riding along, splendidly mounted and splendidly arrayed. When the great man hitched his horse and went into a saloon, the boy dared to go and untie the horse and hold the reins. Soon Buffalo Bill came out, mounted and rode over to the bank. The boy ran after him and again held the horse's head. After a brief stay in the bank, Buffalo Bill appeared again, and rode back to the saloon. This went on for several hours, visits to the bar alternating with other errands about the town. And Johnny was always there to hold the horse and stare. At last the man noticed him and was touched by the devotion in the boy's eyes. Johnny was just the age that his own son Kit would have been had he lived. He himself had known long ago what it was to be a hero-worshiper.

From that day he began to let Johnny do little things for him, such as caring for his horse and his equipment, and soon delighted him with an invitation to go on a trip to the cattle ranch. They set out in a buggy for the sixty-five-mile drive.

Johnny was allowed to drive. The canteen was slung over the whip socket. When the boy reached for the whip, the canteen fell under the wheel and was smashed flat, leaving them with nothing from which to drink. "That's all right," said Buffalo Bill. He drew his revolver, pried the bullet out of the shell, replaced it with

THE MAKING OF BUFFALO BILL

a wad of paper, fired the charge into the canteen and blew the dent out. Then at a creek he rinsed and filled the canteen. "That," says Baker, "was my first boyhood impression of Buffalo Bill when he had to look out for himself."

As noon approached, the hungry boy looked around to see what there was to eat. All he could find in the buggy was some bread, pepper and salt. But to his astonishment, Buffalo Bill said, "Well, we'll have our dinner now," and pointed to some plover flying overhead. He took his .38 Winchester rifle, got out of the buggy, lay flat on his back and brought down two birds at a range of seventy-five yards. When he cooked the plover, he did not draw or pluck them. He built a fire, plastered the birds with mud and covered them with bright embers. When he took them out and broke off the caked mud, the feathers came with it and the entrails dropped out. "He was more than ever my hero after that," says Baker. And on the great day a few years later, when the first Wild West Show rolled out of North Platte, little Johnny Baker went with it, to become the "Cowboy Kid" and a world-famous marksman.

"Immense success and comparative wealth," said Cody, "stimulated me to greater exertion and largely increased my ambition for public favor." His melodrama in the 1880-81 season brought him forty-eight thousand dollars. The next year his company included Dr. Frank Powell, "White Beaver," and several Arapahoe chiefs. Whatever his success, the sense of humor which had shone through his recent autobiography did not desert him. From the stage he had called to his wife "Oh, mamma, but I'm a bad actor." He knew he was still a bad actor, knew that his main reliance was noise and gun-

powder. "That I did not lose my life has always been a marvel to me—no, not from the use of real bullets instead of blank cartridges, but from some members of an irate audience."

His sister wrote: "Will never enjoyed this part of his career. . . . I was present in a Leavenworth theatre during one of his last performances—one in which he played the part of a loving swain to a would-be charming lassie. When the curtain fell on the last act I went behind the scenes, in company with a party of friends, and congratulated the star upon his excellent acting.

" 'Oh, Nellie,' he groaned, 'don't say anything about it. If heaven will forgive me this foolishness, I promise to quit it forever when this season is over.' " *

He was dreaming a new dream. His sister said that he had cherished since boyhood the resolve "that he would one day present to the world an exhibition that would give a realistic picture of life in the Far West, depicting its dangers and privations, as well as its picturesque phases."

There are a dozen stories about the actual origin of the Wild West Show, and most of them smell of the press agent. As early as 1860 P. T. Barnum had projected an outdoor show with Indians and western animals. "He never carried out this plan," says W. L. Werner, "although he was always confident that a show of this character, touring the United States and Europe, would yield large profits." Wild Bill had made his one disastrous experiment of taking a herd of buffalo to Niagara Falls for exhibition in 1870.

Cody said once he had first talked about a show in 1872, when he saw that his days as a scout were at an end:

*His final season on the stage was 1882-83, in *Twenty Days, or Buffalo Bill's Pledge*.

THE MAKING OF BUFFALO BILL

"One night I went out for a walk to think it over, and the idea struck me I might get up a little show of western life and pull over some money on that. I put it up to General Sheridan and asked him what he thought of it.

" 'Never do in the world, Billy,' he said. 'First thing you know some of these bucking broncoes would buck into the audience and kill a couple of people. Or else the buffalo would stampede and there'd be all kinds of trouble.'

"I felt pretty blue and dropped it."

His wife told how, one evening in their cabin at Fort McPherson, after one of his early theatrical tours, he said: "'I've what I think is a great idea. All these people back east want to know just what the West looks like. And you can't tell them on the stage. There isn't room. So I thought 'Why not take the West right to 'em?' "

An old resident of North Platte once told Acton Davies about the start of the Wild West business:

"It was this way. Way back in the early 80's Bill came back from the East where he had been playing in some border drama. Old man M. C. Keetin, one of our leading citizens, had just got together the last herd of buffalo that was ever raised near North Platte. He valued them above rubies, of course; to us they were far, far more valuable than either the last rose of summer or the final run of shad. So as soon as we heard the government was going to buy them for breeding purposes, all the cowboys decided to have a farewell little round-up on Ike Dillon's ranch.

"It was a lively little party and it lasted three days. Then Keetin turned to Bill Cody and said: 'Say Bill, I'd rather sell the buffalo to you than to the government. Why don't you buy 'em, take 'em east with a lot of the

boys and show the tenderfeet a real western show in the open air?' Well, Bill did. You know the rest. . . ."

However much or little of truth there may be in these various stories, it was an experienced showman who definitely conceived and proposed the Wild West exhibition.

One day early in 1882 Cody sat at a restaurant table in New York and listened with glowing eyes while an eloquent young actor and manager pictured for him a new kind of show, made up of cowboys, Indians, Mexicans, bucking horses and buffalo. It was to be presented, not on a cramped stage, but out-of-doors, on the sod; and yet not a circus, for it would be life-like and true in every detail. It would not only sweep the cities of America, but would take by storm the capitals of far-off Europe.

Not long after this exciting conversation, Cody went home to find that ambitious plans were afoot in North Platte for a Fourth of July celebration, an "Old Glory blowout." They appointed him grand marshal.

"Just the man we want," they said. "You get up a wild west show. Give us some examples of roping cattle, fancy shooting and such. We'll put up the money."

"I got out some handbills and sent them to all the ranches for hundreds of miles and advertised in the paper the prizes that would be given for some fancy cowboy stunts. You never saw such a rush to get in. It seemed as if every cattle man in the West wanted to participate. I made up a lot of contests, arranged the prizes, and the day it came off North Platte had the biggest crowd it has ever had before or since." They produced what was in effect a rodeo. As John Burke told of it: "Cody not only scored a howling success, if possible, adding to his popularity, but the casualties were few and the result a

revelation, even to those most familiar with the possibilities of excitement, reckless daring skill and devil-may-care fun represented in a program where all were untrammled and unconventional stars.

"Thus in a still distant and debatable region, a wilderness over which the buffalo roamed and the hostile savage prowled; under most difficult and dangerous conditions; in furtherance of a purely patriotic purpose; was roughly organized an ephemeral celebration, destined through Col. Cody's efforts and masterful personality to become not only the progenitor of all the 'Frontier Day' State and Inter-State tournaments since and still given in the West, and ranking as the most popular attraction at its greatest holiday gatherings, but to serve as the basic idea for an American revelation; border warfare and illustriously illustrative educational entertainment."

In simpler phrase Cody said, "I tried it on my neighbors and they lived through it and liked it. I made up my mind right then that I'd take that show East."

As business manager, Burke went to work, gathering a staff, planning a route, preparing posters and programs for the Wild West, Rocky Mountain and Prairie Exhibition. A book by E. G. Cattermole published early in 1883 concluded a biography of Cody with the announcement: "This year, 1883, Buffalo Bill and Dr. Carver have formed a combination on a more extensive plan than ever before attempted. The plan is to visit all large places with a herd of buffaloes, a large band of Indians and other accessories, and give exhibitions of various characters, in fair grounds or on race courses. As this volume goes to press, the season has not commenced. . . . Barnum must look well to his laurels."

CHAPTER XVII

THE WILD WEST MOVES EAST

THE man who had sat with Cody at table in the Brooklyn restaurant and fired him with the ambition to start an outdoor show was Nate Salsbury. This brilliant showman and tireless trouper had led a life nearly as adventurous as that of the scout.

He was exactly two days younger than Cody, having been born on February 28, 1846, at Freeport, Illinois. Orphaned in childhood, he ran away from a dyspeptic stepfather after a brutal beating. At the age of fifteen he enlisted in the Union army, believing, as he said, in the gay vein that runs through all his writings, that "it was my duty to crush the rebellion at the outset." And indeed he had smelled as much gunpowder as Cody had, for he was at the front in some of the greatest battles.

One scene of his soldiering days came to life at a supper given by the Saturday Night Club in 1888 in honor of Dion Boucicault. General Sherman was among the guests, as was Nate Salsbury, who had been a humble private. Sherman was telling anecdotes of his Georgia campaign. With astonishment, Nate Salsbury heard him saying:

"Passing along the line, I was continually greeted by the familiar, but affectionate greeting of 'Hello, Uncle Billy' from the tired soldiers, who had marched nine miles that morning under the broiling sun. As we neared the right of the regiment my attention was arrested by a boyish voice spouting imperfectly, Hamlet's soliloquy, a short distance ahead of us, then changing into a rollicking

negro melody, accompanied by shouts of laughter that made the welkin ring again. A strange sight met our eyes.

"Standing on the top of a decayed stump of a cedar tree, was a young fellow, who could not have been more than sixteen or seventeen years old, in full uniform, except an old plug hat, that had once been white, that was cocked on the side of his head, after the exaggerated style of the funny men of the minstrel stage, that lent color to the vociferous accents of his vocal efforts. Between the verses of his song he danced a jig to the delight of the lookers on.

"You may think, gentlemen, that this was not so strange a sight after all, but it would have seemed so to you, if you had been there, and realized as I did, that this was an incident in the life of a regiment that had been under fire from the 4th day of May to that 14th day of June."

Colonel Robert Ingersoll interrupted the General by saying, "That must have been a very funny song, General. Do you remember the name of it?"

"No," said Sherman, "I wish I could."

At this point Nate Salsbury found his voice and said, "General Sherman, I can tell you the name of the song, and to prove it I will sing you a verse."

And he sang:

*Oh, Susanna, oh don't cry for me,
I've come from Alabama wid my banjo on my knee.*

The General fairly shouted, "That is the song sure enough. How came you to know?"

"Because I was that kid," said Salsbury.

Singing comic songs under fire and exchanging grim jokes with the guards during the seven months he spent

in Andersonville prison, he discovered a talent for making people laugh. Inevitably, after the war, he drifted to the stage, first as an actor in stock and finally as head of his own company. During twelve years the versatile Salsbury Troubadours packed houses in every English-speaking country in the world. For five years continuously they played *The Brook*, a comedy which Salsbury wrote at a single sitting of twelve hours.

Returning from playing Australia in 1877, Salsbury met on the steamer J. B. Gaylord, an agent of Cooper and Bailey's Circus. Both men loved horses, both had seen the Melbourne races and both had been struck by the riding of the Australian jockeys.

"They can give cards and spades to any other riders in the world," said Gaylord. This offended Salsbury's patriotism. He ventured the opinion that nobody could beat American cowboys and Mexicans for horsemanship.

"We argued this question until the gong sounded for supper," says a memorandum left by him. "The subject stuck in my mind even after I had gone to bed that night. It naturally turned into professional channels, and I began to construct in my mind a show that would embody the whole subject of horsemanship, and before I went to sleep I had mapped out a show that would be constituted of elements that had never been employed in concerted effort in the history of the show business. I knew that certain circus managers had tried to reproduce the riding of the plains, by made-up professional circus riders, but I knew they had never had the real thing.

"Some years passed but I never lost sight of my plan. . . . Finally the thing took the form of a resolve, and I began to look up the elements of the show. I decided that such an entertainment must have a well known figure head to attract attention. After careful considera-

tion I resolved to get W. F. Cody as my central figure. In 1882 while we were both playing an engagement in Brooklyn, or perhaps he was in New York, I made an appointment with him to meet me at the restaurant that adjoined Haverly's Theater.

"As he was about at the end of his profit string on the stage, I dare say he was pleased at the chance to try something else, for he grew very enthusiastic over the plan as I unfolded it to him. . . . It was arranged at that lunch that I would go to Europe the following summer, and look the ground over with a view to taking the show to a country where all its elements would be absolutely novel. As agreed upon I went to Europe the following summer, and looked the ground over. I came to the conclusion that it would take a lot of money to do the thing right and told Cody that we must be well provided with money when we made the plunge, and that so far as I was concerned, I did not feel rich enough to undertake my share of the expense, and that I would have to wait another year before I could go into the scheme in proper shape. To this Cody did not demur, but said that he was in about the same fix as myself. So far, we had arrived at a perfect understanding, that we were to share and share alike in the venture. So far, so good."

Cody went home and tried out the show idea as a Fourth of July celebration. He decided that it was a money-maker. He found another partner, and early in 1883 sent a telegram to Salsbury asking if he wanted to take part in launching the show in the United States—if Doctor Carver did not object.

The proviso was too much for Nate Salsbury. Doctor Carver was, he thought, "a fakir in the show business." He replied promptly that he would not have anything to do with such a combination.

Dr. W. F. Carver advertised himself as "The Evil Spirit of the Plains." Previously he was a dentist. An early acquaintance asserts that Carver "sunk a lead mine trying to learn to shoot." He did, however, become a great exhibition marksman. Whether he had really been an Indian fighter and buffalo-hunter remains unproved; for one does not find his name in the older books and documents. Cody once said, "Carver went west on a piano stool." Carver himself laid claim to the lifetime record for buffalo-killing; he says that his total was thirty thousand, that he killed fifty-seven hundred in a single winter and a hundred and sixty in a single day's run—having made the latter record in a match against Jack McCall, none other than the murderer of Wild Bill Hickok.

In spite of Wild Bill's reputation as a swift and sure shot, it was said that he would never consent to be matched against Carver in trick shooting. "At heart I am an Indian and always will be," Carver would say, when he told of his vain efforts to buy a beautiful Indian squaw with whom he fell in love.

He wore his hair long like Cody's; he also was tall and powerful, and affected the same elaborate buckskin costumes.*

"At five years of age," his publicity used to say, "he was regarded as a phenomenal rifle shot. He was the greatest curiosity among the simple frontiersmen, who regarded him as one upon whom the Almighty had bestowed a spell, and more than one old frontiersman visited young Carver and left feeling satisfied in his own mind that the child was in league with the devil. . . . Standing six feet two inches in height, and weighing two

*Six years the elder, Carver outlived Cody by eleven years and when he died in 1927 he was a showman still; too old to shoot, he was making the rounds of state fairs exhibiting a diving horse.

hundred and forty-eight pounds, with long golden hair framing his handsome face, the *tout ensemble* makes him the perfect picture of a thoroughbred, dashing, whole-souled Western gentleman. He is a man who has never been to school, and knows nothing of education as taught by the present generation, but allow one of Nature's natural born gentlemen to address him, and his refined, pleasant manner will impress you to such an extent that you will be deceived by what Nature has done for him and think you are addressing a graduate of Yale or Harvard.

"With his own brain he originated rifle shooting in the air. He reduced it to a system, and came before the public eight years ago, and nearly every man in America thought him crazy to shoot nickels, thrown in the air, with rifle balls, but the performance must be seen to be believed."

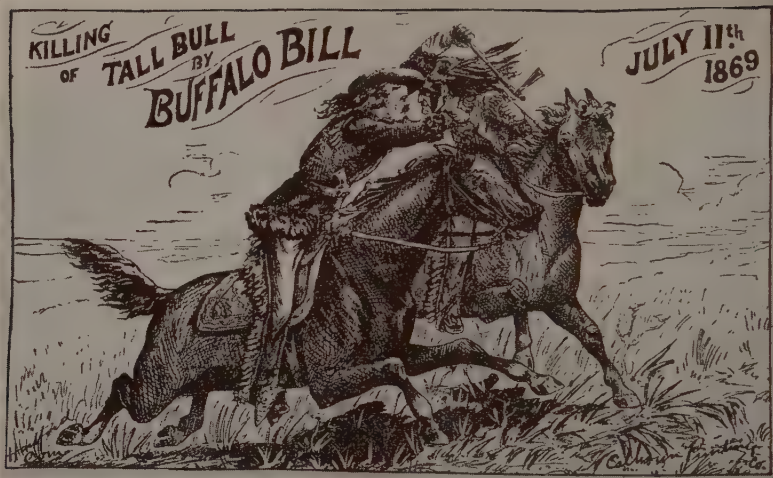
When he became Cody's partner Carver was fresh from a tour of Europe, where his marksmanship had made crowned heads buzz. As a business man he was a poor substitute for the astute Nate Salsbury.

The show was assembled at North Platte during the winter and organized in April at Columbus, Nebraska, which for that reason makes boast of being its birthplace. "Thus it was launched," Cody said, "on the spot famed from time immemorial as the dead line between the powerful Pawnees south of it and the Sioux to the north, a place fairly entitled to its appellation of the dark and bloody ground. This nursery cradle was in a section well grassed, watered and wooded, a natural commissary depot, and in all respects suitable for the beginning of such a venture."

A star attraction was obtained in the person of Captain A. H. Bogardus, world's champion pigeon shot. Down



Nate Salsbury at about the time he and Cody first met and discussed the idea
of a Wild West Show



The upper picture appeared in the Wild West program for 1884. The lower, appeared in Dr. Carver's Show program for the same year, after the partnership between Cody and Carver had been dissolved. It will be noted that the two pictures are identical except for the captions. Cody's books state that he killed Tall Bull with a rifle shot, and other versions of the killing appear in the adjoining text

in Oklahoma a young interpreter named Gordon Lillie gathered a band of Pawnee Indians with squaws and papooses. Major North overcame his dislike for display and allowed himself to be billed as the White Chief of the Pawnees.

Most of the personnel of the show was drawn from among the boys of the Nebraska ranches. They joined up gleefully, but they did not like to be advertised as wild men or tough customers. Their gentleness had to be stressed. Thus Buck Taylor, King of the Cowboys, who could throw a steer by the horns or tail and tie him single-handed, who could master the worst buckner and could lean from the saddle and pluck a neckerchief from the ground as he rode, was "amiable as a child." Jim Lawson, the star roper, was "gentlemanly in conduct, courteous in intercourse." Seth Hathaway, who did the pony express act, preferred the "vicissitudes and danger of the rover of the plains to the luxurious surroundings that his family connections, their wishes and his future prospects could assure him."

Next to the herd of buffalo, the most important property was the dilapidated Deadwood mail-coach. One of the original Concord stages, drawn by six horses and capable of seating twenty-one with a little crowding, the coach was now battered and travel-stained, its bright paint chipped, its leather braces worn. For many a season that coach was to thrill vast audiences, not only because it bounced around the arena, pursued by yelling Indians, but also because of its historic past as recounted in the publicity.

Outlaws had given it the baptism of fire on the line between Deadwood and Cheyenne. "On the occasion of the first attack, the driver, John Slaughter, a son of the present marshal of Cheyenne, was shot to pieces with

buckshot. . . . One of the most terrific of these raids was made by the Sioux Indians, but the assault was successfully repelled, although the two leading horses were killed. . . .

"After this stormy period it was fitted up as a treasure coach, and naturally became the object of renewed interest to the robbers; but, owing to the strong force of what is known as 'shotgun messengers' who accompany the coach, it was a long time before the bandits succeeded in accomplishing their purpose. . . . The bandits themselves were old fighters. The shrewdness of one party was offset by that of the other, and on an unlucky day the celebrated Cold Spring tragedy occurred. The station had been captured, and the road agents secretly occupied the place. The stage arrived in its usual manner, and without suspicion of danger the driver, Gene Barnett, halted at the stable door. An instant later a volley was delivered that killed Hughey Stevenson, sent the buckshot through the body of Gail Hill, and dangerously wounded two others of the guards. The bandits then captured the outfit, amounting to some sixty thousand dollars in gold.

"On another occasion the coach was attacked and, when the driver was killed, saved by a woman—Martha Jane Canary, better known at the present time in the wild history of the frontier as 'Calamity Jane.' Amid the fire of the attack, she seized the lines, and, whipping up the team, safely brought the coach to its destination.

"When Buffalo Bill returned from his scout with General Crook in 1876, he rode in this self-same stage, bringing with him the scalps of several of the Indians whom he had met. When afterwards he learned that it had been attacked and abandoned and was lying neglected on the plains, he organized a party, and starting

on the trail, rescued and brought the vehicle into camp. With the sentiment that attaches to a man whose life has been identified with the excitement of the far West, the scout has now secured the coach from Col. Voorhees."

The Wild West, Rocky Mountain and Prairie Exhibition was seen for the first time on May 17, 1883, at the fair-grounds in Omaha, on the west bank of the Missouri, the outpost of the West.

Except that it was out-of-doors the show was utterly unlike the circus. It had no tents. Canvas overhead would have been riddled by bullets at every performance. "The Grassy Sward Our Carpet, Heaven's Azure Canopy Our Canvas!" It had no side-shows and freaks, no clowns, no acrobats in tights doing meaningless tricks. "No Tinsel, no Gilding, No Humbug!"

Thunder of hoofs, clank of spurs, rattle of wheels, swish of lariat and crack of rifles, glint of shattered glass balls, odors of gunpowder and cattle, made it authentic and amazing. It began with a bareback pony race between Indians and went on to its climax with a "grand realistic battle scene depicting the capture, torture and death of a scout by the savages, the revenge, recapture of the dead body and victory of the cowboys and government scouts." Cowboys rode the bucking broncoes, roped and tied the Texas steers, lassoed and rode the wild bison. A fleet-footed Indian ran a race with a mounted rival. The pony express rider dashed in, changed his mochila to a fresh mount and dashed off again. The "startling and soul-stirring attack on the Deadwood mail coach" ended in a rescue by scouts led by Cody and Carver. Bogardus shot clay pigeons.

As luck would have it, Doctor Carver had one of those off days that come to all marksmen. He scored so badly that the crowd yelled, "We want Bill Cody!" Not hav-

ing intended to shoot at the balls, Cody had no exhibition gun, but he borrowed one, stepped into the arena and shot rings round Carver. From then on he was billed equally with Carver to do "novel and extraordinary shooting on foot and on horseback."

From Omaha the show toured eastward, Lillie joining it with his Pawnees at the second stand. Everywhere it played at fair-grounds. For lack of adequate lighting at night it could give only one performance a day, in the afternoon, except at Coney Island, New York, where a temporary stand was erected for a five weeks' run.

Six weeks after he left the Platte River Cody was astonishing sedate Boston by the skill with which he drove his strange cavalcade of wagons, buffalo, elk, steers, mules, ponies and Indians through the narrow curves of Washington Street.

The "upper ten" of Newport society turned out among the ten thousand people who filled the Aquidnuck Fair-Grounds in mid-July. Lord Mandeville became the lion of the day by volunteering to be a passenger in the Deadwood coach during the pursuit by Indians, and by swooning dramatically as if wounded. "Half a dozen cowboys sprang to the coach door and tenderly brought the Duke of Manchester's son and heir out and conveyed him carefully to the judge's stand, where he was tended by loving hands, beneath the influence of which he speedily recovered."

The conservative *Hartford Courant* said that this was the best open-air show ever seen, and added: "The real sight of the whole thing is, after all, Buffalo Bill, a perfect model of manly beauty. Mounted on his blooded horse, he rode around the grounds, the observed of all observers. Cody was an extraordinary figure, and sits on a horse as if he were born in the saddle. His feats of

shooting are perfectly wonderful. . . . He has, in this exhibition, out-Barnumed Barnum."

Internally, however, all was not well with the show. In the sixteen-car train, one whole car was devoted to a stock of liquor. For the first few weeks, as Courtney Ryley Cooper has vividly told, "it was an eternal gamble as to whether the show would exist from one day to the next, not because of a lack of money, but simply through an absence of human endurance necessary to stay awake twenty hours out of twenty-four, that the birth of a new amusement enterprise might properly be celebrated. When the show got into town and the biggest saloon announced an open house for the company, it was quite all right with Bill Cody. In fact, striving always to be the good fellow, he would be in the thickest of the celebration, whooping it up as long as anyone else—and sometimes a bit longer. Then, at the last possible moment, there would be a rush to the show lot, and as much attention paid to business as possible under the conditions."

Lillie described the shock he experienced when he joined the show: "I had been carrying around in my mind for a dozen years or more, the picture of Buffalo Bill as I had first seen him, a fine looking man, well groomed, with a beautiful buffalo robe coat. I never was so disappointed in my life. He had been sleeping on the floor of a tent in some hay, his fur coat was missing, his hair was all matted and he was drunk. . . . Colonel Cody was drunk every day for our first five weeks out."

There was no head or tail to the management. Cody could charm the crowds and Burke could get the publicity, but Carver was a liability. One day at Coney Island, angered by his own bad shooting, he smashed his rifle over his horse's ears and punched the assistant who

was throwing up the glass balls. Always he was reckless. When three balls were thrown up at once, the third would sometimes fall almost to the ground while he was breaking the first two, but he would fire even if the ball were within a few inches of the assistant's toes.

Nate Salsbury went to see the show and predicted that it would come to a ghastly failure, but still believed that there was money in it if properly handled. By the time it got into Chicago, in the autumn, Cody was badly worried. Fortunately, Salsbury was playing Chicago at the same time. "Cody came to see me," says his record of the occasion, "and said that if I did not take hold of the show he was going to quit the whole thing. He said he was through with Carver, and that he would not go through such another summer for a hundred thousand dollars." When Carver urged a winter tour, Cody would not consent. With relief he turned to Salsbury.

John P. Altgeld drew the contract which set up a new partnership between Cody, Salsbury and Bogardus. It was given out for publication that, "To the fertile brains of Messrs. Cody and Salsbury we are indebted for the first conjuring up of this novel project. They spoke of it years ago, and Salsbury went to Europe to see if it would be advisable to take such a show on the continent. Meanwhile, with Mr. Salsbury's knowledge, Buffalo Bill started the enterprise. . . ." Thus Nate Salsbury's early claim on the idea of the Wild West Show was acknowledged. He went on with his Troubadours, already laying plans for the reorganization of the Wild West. Cody left the show at Chicago to go to the death-bed of his daughter Orra, as seven years earlier he had gone to that of his son Kit.*

*A third daughter, Irma, had been born on February 9, 1883.

On a chilly day in late October Cody and Carver met at Omaha, where the show had opened, and divided the assets equally. They flipped a silver dollar and chose in turn horse and horse, steer and steer, wagon and wagon. The fact that in the luck of the toss Cody got the Deadwood coach did not keep Carver from having a Deadwood coach in his own show, which he promptly organized with Captain Jack Crawford as a feature.

The next spring two Wild West shows took the road. Any one who happened to see them both might have been struck by the fact that there was one picture which was used in both programs. It was an engraving of a desperate hand to hand fight, on horseback, between an Indian and a white scout. In Carver's program the caption under this picture was "Killing of Whistler, chief of the Ogallalah and Brulé Sioux, by Dr. Carver." In Cody's program the caption on the same picture was "Killing of Tall Bull by Buffalo Bill."

CHAPTER XVIII

"A DAM CONDEMNED JONER"

OUTDOOR showmen, especially Wild West showmen, had troubles of their own, quite different from those of the theater. Nate Salsbury got an insight into his new task when he received the following letter, four weeks before his first season was to begin:

North Platte, Neb. Apr. 12. (1884)

My dear Nate,

Here I am foot loose and ready for work. But no money neither do I know what I am to do about giving bonds for Indians. . . . I can get Pawnees without any permission but as Burke has agitated the question its best now to give the bonds but I know nothing what he agreed to do—so I am up a stump until I get money and hear about how to give bonds for Indians. I have bought twelve head of horses and paid for them, including five buckers. Nate what can or had we better do about gambling privileges. I can get the best man in the world to run them and do it in a nice quiet way if you say so. What do you think about it? Write me and tell me what to do—and if we don't get that *money* what in K Christ are we to do?

Write soon,

CODY

Gambling on the lot? Salsbury put his foot down on that. Money? Salsbury supplied it. Bonds for Indians taken off the reservation? Salsbury arranged them.

as I told you that
I am to do my best
for another season
yet best of winter when
the show is laid up
for winter I am going
to get me a new suit
it is a suit of just
to a new suit of
I will paint the first
one but not
but till then I am
staunch & true -
With my shoulder to
the wheel & all -

Cody

Johnnie Butler
to shooting to beat L. buck
balls in the air like an
old timer; want to hear him

This summer



Central portion of a group of the original Wild West Company in 1884. At Cody's left are Captain Bogardus and his sons. At Cody's right is Nate Salisbury, and between them, Johnny Baker. John Nelson with his squaw and papooses in the front row

"A DAM CONDEMNED JONER"

When he arrived at the race-track in St. Louis, where the show was to open, he had an experience harrowing to one who had been trained in the rigid discipline of the trouper. He wrote a memorandum describing the scene:

"One can imagine my perturbation on going out to the grounds where the Wild West forces had been put in camp by Cody, to find him boiling drunk. . . . I found him surrounded by a lot of harpies called old timers who were getting as drunk as he at his expense. . . . He had taken a plug hat from someone in the crowd, and jammed it on his head, and as his hair was long and thick in those days, a more ridiculous figure could not be imagined than he cut with his arm round White Beaver while they rehearsed the exploits of the frontier to the gaping gang of bloodsuckers that surrounded them."

A stiff reprimand in writing brought the following good-natured reply, which is preserved in Cody's hand:

My dear Salsbury

Your very sensible and truly rightful letter has just been read and it has been the means of showing me just where I stand. And I solemnly promise you that after this you will never see me under the influence of liquor. I may have to take two or three drinks today to brace up on that will be all as long as we are partners. I appreciate all you have done. Your judgment and [in] business is good and from this on I will do my work to the letter. This drinking surely ends today and your pard will be himself, and on deck all the time.

Yours always

W. F. CODY

The spree, which probably was not as serious as it seemed to the worried partner, lasted until the show

reached Pittsburgh, where, as Cody usually put it, "his liver flopped" and he had to go to bed.

The personnel of the show was stronger. More of the boys from North Platte had come along, and with them others drawn from distant frontiers by the lure of an eastern tour.

Presiding over the camp of "genuine blanket Indians" was John Nelson, the squaw man, otherwise Cha-sha-sha-o-po-ge-o, meaning Red Willow Fill the Pipe. Nelson, an old guide, had married an Ogallala wife, and she and several of their six papooses traveled with the show. He was featured as one who "by general honesty of character and energy has gained fame and respect among whites and Indians." For many years his whiskers were to float in the breeze as he sat on the top of the careening Deadwood coach.

At the ribbons of the coach was Fred Matthews, also well bearded. Among the cowboys was Bill Bullock, a half-breed, "combining the best blood of the Sioux with the blue blood of the East." Law and order was represented by Con Groner, "the cow-boy sheriff of the Platte" and the "Nemesis of the lawless." Audiences read that "Over fifty murderers, more than that number of horse-thieves, cattle-cutters, burglars and outlaws have been caught and convicted through his efforts, notably the Doc Middleton and his allied gangs, and when Doc in conjunction with Jesse James's party surrounded North Platte in their contemplated attack on the Union Pacific train at Garnett station, six miles east, Groner's strategy frustrated their plans, captured six, scattered the rest, and saved the train. He has followed horse-thieves 1,900 miles through Nebraska, Idaho and Montana, through sand hills, deep canyons, strange valleys, up mountain peaks, in forest fastnesses, facing the fierce blizzards,

"A DAM CONDEMNED JONER"

sleeping out at night with his saddle blanket for a bed, his saddle for a pillow, his horse and rifle for companions, and hardly ever failed to bag his game."*

Utah Frank, Broncho Bill, Montana Joe and Blue Hall swelled the ranks. It was announced that at some of the large cities the show would include a shooting act by White Beaver, or Dr. W. F. Powell, "chief medicine man of the Winnebago Sioux—a reckless adventurer on the boundless prairies, and yet in elegant society as amiable as a school-girl in the ballroom; evincing the polish of the aristocrat and a cultured mind that shines with vigorous lustre where learning displays itself."

Bracketed with Frank North was Honorable David L. Payne, Old Oxheart, the Cimarron scout, whose struggle with the national government over the settlement of Oklahoma made an interesting story in the show program:

"Capt. Payne's Oklahoma colony comprises nearly 10,000 persons, many of whom have followed their intrepid leader into the territorial wilderness, and there reared their cabins, only to be arrested or driven out by the U. S. military. . . . The Indians have surrounded his cabin in the lonely solitude of those primeval forests, threatened his life, tried to burn his home, and watched day and night for opportunity to murder him; but ever on the alert, Payne has defied the danger which threatened; with trusty Winchester he has defended his cabin against scores of his wily foes, and laid low many prowling night-hawks, until his very name has become a terror to the Indians of that region. To continue this fight against the greed of remorseless capitalists, Capt. Payne has endured such hardships as few men have been forced

*Obviously the prototype of the Canadian Northwest Mounted Police as seen in the movies to-day.

to suffer, proving himself true to principle, and a frontier hero of just renown—a man who cannot be intimidated nor swerved by hardships from his purposes and duty. While waiting for certain developments in his still continued contest, Capt. Payne will accompany, for recreation only, his old friend Buffalo Bill's 'Wild West,' to renew again the cherished object so dear to the progressive spirit of the Oklahoma Raiders."

The style of these extracts betrays the presence in the publicity tent of a nimble pen. It was that of none other than Colonel Prentiss Ingraham, the dime novelist, who was now assisting Burke. Between the two, they sprayed about the show an atmosphere of rugged romance which clung to it for thirty years.

But whatever exaggerations the press agents wrote into the lives of Cody and others, the show itself was honest, true to its period and free from all faking. Nate Salisbury's object was expressed in the advertising: "The Only Real Novelty of the Century. The Amusement Triumph of the Age. The Romantic West Brought East in Reality. Everything Genuine. Each Scene Instructive. Civilization's Reception to its Pioneers. Amusement, Instruction and Education to All. Air, Light, Life and Health to the Auditor. A Year's Visit West in Three Hours. Actual Scenes in the Nation's Progress, Delight, Please, Gratify, Chain and Interest the Visitor." The integrity of the performance itself was also stressed in a "card to the public" signed by Cody: "A true rescript of life on the frontier as I know it to be, and which no fictitious pen can describe."

Two weeks after the opening at St. Louis, the show packed the driving park in Chicago on one day with 41,448 people, and this in spite of threatened rain. A month later it reached New York.

"A DAM CONDEMNED JONER"

On Sunday afternoon, June 15, 1884, silk-hatted strollers on Fifth Avenue paused to stare at a weather-beaten stage-coach, drawn by six horses. On top of the coach sat Cody and Bogardus and Prentiss Ingraham, and with them six newspaper reporters, clinging dubiously to the narrow seats. The coach rolled majestically up the Avenue and to the Polo Grounds where at the Wild West camp a whole ox was roasting over a great fire. Dinner was served to the newspaper men in a tent carpeted with the skins of wild animals.

"A large barrel and several corpulent bottles were noticeable in a corner of the tent [the *Herald* reporter wrote], and the eyes of a number of persons in the party turned upon them during the progress of the meal with an expression of horrified suspicion. Mr. Cody, however, noticing these looks, speedily put all temperance scruples at rest by explaining that the cask was nicknamed 'Hiawatha' and that it contained the laughing waters of the Dreen-ken-swell River, a stream recently discovered in the Indian Territory. The bottles, he said, contained various preparations concocted by competent medicine men. The various fluids were tasted out of curiosity by the members of the party."

When the show opened the next day, the New York audience saw a vastly better entertainment than it had seen at Coney Island the year before. There was still plenty of banging of rifles and revolvers. Captain Bogardus did his marvels at the traps and Cody on horseback broke the glass balls. The cowboys lassoed steers and Cody chased buffalo around the ring. Indians attacked the stage-coach, which was lighted within by red fire as though the passengers were being burned to death, and Cody led the rescue.

Frank North, although he never thought much of this

show business, consented to lead the Pawnees in their war dance.

A review in the *Spirit of the Times* caught the flavor: "A settler's cabin is in the middle of the field; a woman works in and out of it; a boy chops wood before the door. The settler rides home with meat for supper; hobbles his horse and embraces his family. Look! A wild Indian is creeping through the grass to steal the horse. Bang! goes the settler's rifle and the Indian falls. Whoop! Bang! All the Indians who were killed during the attack upon the stage-coach come to life and attack the cabin. Again the cowboys, led by Buffalo Bill, ride to the rescue, banging as they approach. The cabin is in flames; the field is strewn with doubly-dead Indians; the cowboys parade triumphantly in front of the grand stand and the Wild West Show is over.

"'Well, sir,' replied the policeman of whom we inquired what the public thought of the performance, 'it's rather a thin kind of a show, but it's a novelty and it will pay for a fortnight.'"

For all his citified cynicism, however, the reviewer was shrewd enough to see that here was something more than a timely entertainment. He also predicted that Barnum must look to his laurels:

"The only artistic interest in the show is that it seems to us to contain the germ of the circus of the future. Even the smallest boys of the present generation must be weary of seeing bespangled persons riding round a small ring upon the broad, padded backs of horses trained to gallop as gently as rocking chairs. The circus is behind the times. For years it has introduced no novelties. The managers have to combine it with a menagerie and a museum to make it attractive. Now, some tribes of Indians, notably the Comanches, have long been famous

for feats which no circus rider has ever attempted in the ring. . . . Why should not Buffalo Bill engage some Comanche braves and show us the real feats? The best part of his present entertainment is not the shooting but the riding. His cowboys, Mexicans and Indians may not be as wild as the playbills assert, but they know how to ride. . . . Let him take this hint for next season and he will make Barnum and Forepaugh shake in their shoes, despite their white elephants, gilded chariots, Roman races and triple rings. He has hit upon one good idea already, and has only to enlarge and perfect it in order to eclipse all rivalry. As for money, when he is tired of touring this country, there is an immense fortune awaiting him in England. . . ."

In this comment are reflected the two ideas with which Nate Salsbury had begun—to create an exhibition of American horsemanship, and to take it to Europe.

One day as he stood watching it he turned to a reporter and said, "It's all right. If I had to choose between the Troubadours and the Wild West, I would take the Wild West for mine." This was saying a great deal, considering that the Troubadours was then one of the most profitable attractions on the road, drawing to capacity wherever it appeared.

The first serious accident occurred at Hartford, late in July. While the Indians and cowboys were sweeping around the arena Frank North's saddle girth broke. He was thrown in the path of hundreds of galloping hoofs. All but one of the skilful riders managed to pull his pony aside, but that one ran full over him. His ribs were crushed and his spine injured. Such casualties, and there were many in the history of the show, proved more clearly than reams of press-agent copy, that the wildness of the riding was genuine and that these men did not

play safe. North was left behind in the hospital, with little Johnny Baker to keep him company, while the tour continued.

Worse disaster struck in December. The partners decided to try the experiment of playing south, where outdoor performances could be given all winter. There was to be a great exposition at New Orleans. Thus early Salsbury saw the value of dating the Wild West for long runs at cities to which dignified expositions were likely to draw large crowds. His plan now was to put the show on a boat, play down the Mississippi River to cover expenses, reach New Orleans just before Christmas and settle down there until spring. Since Salsbury and his Troubadours also were to play a winter season, and Salsbury would be busy, an advance agent was required to select stands and arrange transportation. For this job Cody picked Pony Bob Haslam, famous twenty-five years before as the greatest of the pony express riders, and now an old friend in need of a job. Pony Bob, said Salsbury, "had as little judgment in such matters as any man I have ever met with in my whole life, and while he was perfectly devoted to the service he undertook, he had not the slightest fitness for the work. He blundered along in a haphazard kind of way until he reached New Orleans, but he was sharp enough to send back the rosiest kind of reports on the condition of the country through which the route was laid."

Bob hired a river boat at Cincinnati. Before long his employers realized that he was a better judge of a mustang and its rider than he was of a steamboat and its navigator. Nor had his judgment of stopping points along the river been successful. Losses began to mount.

As he neared New Orleans Cody reckoned that he had better jump ahead by rail and see what was in store for

him there. Arriving Monday morning, he hailed a hack and hurried out to the grounds which Pony Bob had rented. The first man he saw there was coming toward him in a rowboat. Four days of rain had made a lake of the arena. After hours of hustling, Cody found that he could engage the Metarie Race Track, and went to his hotel to rest and congratulate himself. There he was greeted by a telegram.

The tub on which the show was traveling had collided with another steamer. The captain had run her ashore, patched her up and moved out into the river again, only to go down in thirty feet of water. Buffalo, steers, sheep and elk had been helpless in the yellow current. Every animal except some of the horses was drowned. All of the equipment was lost except the Deadwood coach and the bandwagon. Bogardus and the men had had narrow escapes.

Nate Salsbury was at the Opera House in Denver, about to go on the stage to sing a comic song, when this telegram was handed to him:

OUTFIT AT THE BOTTOM OF THE RIVER, WHAT SHALL
I DO?

CODY.

The singer rushed to the speaking-tube and begged the conductor of the orchestra to play the introductory music again, "Play it a little harder while I think a minute." After thought, he turned the telegram over and wrote on the back:

GO TO NEW ORLEANS AND OPEN ON YOUR DATE.
HAVE WIRED YOU FUNDS.

SALSURY.

THE MAKING OF BUFFALO BILL

This was a stiff assignment for Cody, still a tyro. He amazed and delighted his partner by "coming to the front as an emergency man, in the hardest tussle of his whole career." He scoured the Southwest for animals, wagons, arms and a hundred other items of equipment, and he opened on the advertised date before Christmas, two weeks after the accident.

Then followed forty-four straight days of rain—the bitterest enemy of outdoor show folk.

There was a day when the ticket-seller came into Cody's tent and said, "We'd better call off the show to-day, there's only nine people in."

"Did they pay to get in?"

"Yes."

"Well, if nine people came out here in all this rain to see us, we'll show," said Cody.

And so that day one hundred and fifty people entertained nine customers.

But the steady drizzle and pour washed away the nerve of the man who had fought Indians and blizzards. He wrote:

N. O. Feb. 14

My dear Pard

The camels back is broken. This day I looked forward to as one to help us out, worked every possible means to make it a success but God, Christ and the devil is against me. the morning opened bright I started with a full parade, thousands of people in the damed City. And we would surely have played to \$2000 had it not been so ordained that we should not. At 10:30 it clouded all up of a suddent and poured rain until 4 P M then it cleared up again Just as pleasant as before. its plain to me now. I can read

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it clearly. *fate* if there is such a thing is against me. there is not one bit of use trying more the longer we stick at this the worse off we are—the sooner we give this outfit away the better—I am thoroughly discouraged, I am a dam condemned Joner and the sooner you get clear of me the better for you. . . .

I am an *Ingersol* man from this out. And a damed Joner disgusted with myself and the world—there is no *heaven*—if so it can stay there and be damed—

Your Pard & take my advice and quit him

CODY.

Nate Salsbury had no idea of quitting and said so by letter and emissary. A few weeks later Cody wrote again in better vein:

N. O. Mar 9

My Dear Pard

Well the weather is better but there is but few strangers in the city, and the people proper of the city are to dam poor to patronize anything although will try to pay expenses while here. . . . Now about Buffalo I thought of pulling through to Washington with what we have but we must have some when we get there. I did know of six head in Dakota have written about them. Do you know of any? We have just about the same number of horses we had last summer. Will have about twenty-five Indians in the saddle 7 Mexicans and 8 cow boys when we leave here. When can you join the outfit? I sent North to Nebraska to fix my business there and to get some money for me and bring the new Indians I will keep some of these Indians but most of them are farmers at home and will have to be sent back 1st of April. I guess North

will surely get money enough to pay that expense—he is going to try and get me \$5,000 . . . don't fear about my getting off. As I told you that I am to do my best for another season yet next winter when the show is laid up for winter I am going to get on a drunk that is a drunk. Just to change my luck I will paint a few towns red hot—but till then I am staunch and true—With my shoulder to the wheel Eli—

CODY.

Frank North did not return with money or Indians. He had never recovered from his injuries received in the arena. As the winter passed he had grown worse, and he was glad to go home in March. Whether or not Cody knew it, North had gone home to die.

A week after they had said good-by Cody had word of the death of the loyal friend who had scouted with him, had shoved him into the arms of the dime novelist, and as his partner had built up the cattle ranch from which the Wild West Show had been recruited.

CHAPTER XIX

THE SURE-SHOTS

WORKING up from the mire of New Orleans, Cody was met at Birmingham by a challenge. A local marksman wanted to shoot with him for a purse of one hundred and twenty-five dollars. For such small change as that, no showman ordinarily would run the risk of being beaten by an unknown. But Cody needed money so badly that he accepted the challenge, stepped out and broke fifty straight.

Although the Wild West was lopsided with shooting acts, Cody was creating another. His fondness for Johnny Baker led him to devote long hours to teaching the fourteen-year-old boy to handle the rifle. It was a happy task, and an easy one, for his pupil had an uncanny instinct for finding the mark. Cody wrote to his partner: "Johnnie Baker is shooting to beat L—breaks balls in the air like an old timer. I want to star him this summer."

Johnny's chance came quickly. Bogardus was pulling out, disheartened by the losses which, thanks to the rain, stood at sixty thousand dollars for the year. Past fifty now, Bogardus had been before the public for many years and, as the program said in a reference undoubtedly aimed at the quarrelsome Doctor Carver, "could look calmly back on an unblemished professional record." His specialty was pigeon shooting. Audiences were informed concerning the pigeons: "In deference to the humanitarian sentiment, these matches are all shot at Ligowsky

THE MAKING OF BUFFALO BILL

'clay pigeons,' an ingenious mechanical contrivance that furnishes an exact imitation of the bird's flight, and produces all the exciting and pleasurable sensation induced by fine workmanship when live birds are used. Ladies and children can, therefore, witness and enjoy this unique exhibition with no violence to the feelings, while the expert and experienced sportsman can still appreciate the excellence of the shooting, the clay pigeons heightening rather than diminishing the sport."

Bogardus' broad claim was: "In pigeon shooting I have made the highest records that have ever been made in the world, and there are the general odds now offered, of a hundred dollars to ten, that they cannot be equalled by any one. . . . At Brighton Beach, Coney Island, July 2, 1880, at thirty yards, from five ground-traps, I killed 99 birds out of 100 single. . . .

"In New York I accomplished the greatest feat of my life, as far as endurance, rapid shooting and accuracy were concerned, for I broke 5,500 glass balls in seven hours, nineteen minutes and two seconds out of 5,854, loading my own gun and changing barrels about every fifty shots."

Already, after holding open for five weeks an offer to shoot against any one, he had announced that he would retire and no longer seek to defend his title as champion shot of the world. He wanted to settle down and put his four sons in school.

These boys had been a strong feature of the show as "juvenile exponents of America's shooting future." Eugene, now twenty, had won medals at home and abroad. The *American Field* had said that "his feat of shooting double balls, both thrown into the air at the same time, will be found difficult to equal by any living person with a rifle. He breaks the two balls within a

foot of each other, and to satisfy any 'doubting Thomas' as to his ability to break balls out of a trap, he broke ten straight with his forty-four Winchester, and, to top off with, broke two pairs of doubles with the same little rifle." Edward at fourteen and Peter at twelve were proficient with both shotgun and rifle, while little Henry, now only ten, had begun his public career when he was seven, traveling with his father in Cole's Circus and—so the program said—shooting glass balls held in the captain's fingers.

When the Bogardus boys went reluctantly off to school, the lucky youngster from North Platte took their place in the show. Johnny, the Cowboy Kid, immediately won his audiences by breaking glass balls while holding his rifle in a dozen different positions. In time he learned to shoot standing on his head with an assistant steadying his feet. A comedy touch which always delighted the crowds was the discovery, just as he was getting set, of a large pebble pressing into the top of his head.

Captain Bogardus was hardly missed, for in the nick of time a girl of nineteen arrived and with all the force of her five foot stature, her hundred pounds and her friendly smile, insisted upon joining the show. It was Annie Oakley.

Many a man now gray, who once perched on a hard wooden plank and watched her through a haze that was half powder smoke and half boyish dreaming, will still confess that Annie was his first hopeless love. Annie was born in Darke County, Ohio, in 1866. A tomboy from babyhood, she became a neighborhood celebrity through the success with which she hunted game to sell in the market. When she was fifteen a shooting team came to the Cincinnati Opera House. A hotel-keeper who knew Annie's skill arranged a match, which she won.

The man she defeated was Frank Butler. Frank not only cheerfully granted her superiority but he also fell in love and married her. After a while she went on the stage with him, her name featured above his.

Old Sitting Bull, returned from exile in Canada, saw her in a St. Paul theater. He christened her "Little Sure Shot," and adopted her as his "daughter" and a member of the Sioux nation. Such at least was the legend, it being Sitting Bull's genial habit to adopt into his tribe those white people whom he liked.

From the variety theaters Annie and her husband rose to the circus. By good fortune they were dated in New Orleans while the Wild West was there. After the custom of showfolk, the two troops exchanged visits. Annie, who was disgusted with the conditions under which she had to eat and sleep and travel with the circus, was struck by the happiness of the Wild West camp and by Cody's kindliness. She teased Cody and Salsbury to give her a trial—even a three days' trial at no pay—to prove what she could do. They consented, and she joined at Louisville.

There was never any question of a trial, for she made good at rehearsal. Nor was there any question of terms; she once said, "I never had a written contract with Buffalo Bill. I didn't need any. Our outfit was more like a clan than a show or a business. We remained just one big family with Buffalo Bill at its head." To him she was always "Little Missy."

A graceful girl in the arena was a novelty, and a useful one. Experience had shown that women in the audience were likely to squeal with fright at the sudden bursts of rifle fire. Putting Annie on early interested the women spectators, got them used to the crack of shots and persuaded them that there must be slight danger in weapons

A PRACTICAL "ALL-ROUND SHOT."

In contradistinction to the many so-called "fancy shots" that have for years been before the public, Buffalo Bill is what may be termed a "practical marksman," and where that expression's full meaning is understood, he is looked on as a marvelous



"all-round shot." That is, a man of deadly aim in any emergency, with any weapon—a small Derringer, a Colt's, a shot-gun, a carbine, a blunderbuss, or a rifle—at any foe, red or white; at any game—chicken, jack-rabbit, antelope, deer, buffalo, bear, or elk; at the swiftest birds or soaring eagle; on foot, in any position; on horseback, at any speed. To be such a marksman is only the result of years of necessity for exercising the faculties of instantaneous measurement of distance, acuteness of vision—in fact, an eagle eye and iron nerves—to think quick, to resolve, to fire, to kill. As a hunter these gifts have rendered him famous, and gained him plaudits from admiring officers, noblemen, sportsmen, and competitors in the chase, and compelled the respect and fear of his implacable Indian foes. That he exists to-day is the result of the training that enables a man, in the most startling exigency, to command himself, and to meet the circumstances face to face, whatever they may be, and achieve, by cool precision, deserved victory in the field, and embellish history with deeds of heroism. Mr. Cody will give an exhibition of his ability by shooting objects thrown in the air while galloping at full speed, executing difficulties that would receive commendation if accomplished on foot, and which can only be fully appreciated by those who have attempted the feat while experiencing a rapid pace when occupying "a seat in the saddle."

CODY SAVES WILD BILL.

"After a very long march, full of hardships and sufferings, Gen. Penrose's camp was found on the Palodora in a most distracted condition. Gen. Carr's arrival was none too soon, as the famished men were sustaining life on the last carcasses of their draught animals. In a few weeks Black Kettle's depredations necessitated a pursuit. . . . The consolidated command discovered the Indians on the Cimarron, and a terrific battle ensued. . . . In this fight Buffalo Bill and Wild Bill did almost the work of a regiment; braver men never went into an action, both fighting as though they were invulnerable. In the fury and rout which followed the first charge Wild Bill gave chase to Black Kettle, head chief of the Cheyennes, engaged and overtook the fleeing red warrior, stabbing him to death. But the accomplishment of this heroic action would have cost him his own life, had not Buffalo Bill ridden with impetuous daring into the very midst of fully fifty Indians, who had surrounded Wild Bill, intent on either his capture or death. These two daring and intrepid scouts plunged furiously into the midst of the Indians, each with a revolver in either hand, and literally carved their way through the

surging mass of redskins, leaving a furrow of dead Indians in their wake. Such fighting, such riding, and such marvelous intrepidity combined, were doubtless never equaled, and if but this act alone were credited to the valor of Wild Bill and Buffalo Bill, their names would deserve inscription on Fame's enduring monument."—Buel's History, page 322.

A page from the show program illustrating how Cody shot glass balls and describing him as an all round shot. The lower portion of the text reprints Buel's story of the rescue of Wild Bill by Cody during the fight with Black Kettle, at which neither of the two scouts was present



The Deadwood stage coach. Cody with the cane; Johnny Baker at his right; John Burke on the whiffletree; Buck Taylor leaning on the wheel; on top, John Nelson with two of his papooses

that this little girl could handle and fire. The press of the period remarked that she could perform feats of marksmanship which "were scarcely to be expected from one of the fair sex." She broke pigeons from the trap, single and double. She broke balls with the rifle held high above her head. She would lay her gun down, throw balls in the air, pick up her gun and break them before they fell. The program reported that she had once shot steadily for nine hours, using three 16-gauge hammer guns which she loaded herself, breaking 4772 out of 5000 balls; on the second thousand she had missed only sixteen, making a thousand ball record of 984.

Annie's popularity led to the engagement for the next season of Lillian Smith, a fifteen-year-old huntress from California. At the age of seven Lillian had expressed herself as tired of dolls and had demanded a little rifle. Before long she had brought down in one day forty red-heads and mallards, mostly on the wing, had shot a wild-cat out of the high limbs of a redwood tree and at a turkey shoot had killed so many birds that the managers had asked her to "drop out and give the boys a chance." In the Wild West she would hit a plate thirty times in fifteen seconds. She would break ten balls hung from strings and swinging round a pole. When a ball was thrown in the air, she would fire three times to miss, then break it with the fourth shot.

Lillian promptly did the show a good turn by silencing Doctor Carver, who was still making trouble. Carver and Cody had been denouncing each other in print. Each had sued the other for libel and had tried the old circus game of stopping the other man's show by slapping attachments on it. The Wild West survived, but Carver had had to close. Lillian's father challenged Carver to a match with her in a St. Louis theater. When the hour

came, Carver did not appear. John Burke gloated, "The young lady has every right to say that she frightened off the Evil Spirit of the Plains."

There were still other marksmen in the arena, notably Seth Clover who could break marbles with bullets. But no matter how brilliant were Seth and Johnny and Annie and Lillian, the stands saved their loudest cheers for the shooting of Buffalo Bill himself. Although he had not originally set himself up as a sure-shot, Cody found himself rivaling his star performers. The program explained that:

"In contradistinction to the many so-called fancy shots that have for years been before the public, Buffalo Bill is what may be termed a 'practical marksman,' and where that expression's full meaning is understood, he is looked on as a marvelous all-round shot. That is, a man of deadly aim in any emergency, with any weapon—a small Derringer, a Colt's, a shot-gun, a carbine, a blunderbuss, or a rifle—at any foe, red or white; at any game—chicken, jack-rabbit, antelope, deer, buffalo, bear, or elk; at the swiftest bird or soaring eagle; on foot, in any position; on horseback, at any speed. To be such a marksman is only the result of years of necessity for exercising the faculties of instantaneous measurement of distance, acuteness of vision—in fact, an eagle eye and iron nerves—to think quick, to resolve, to fire, to kill. As a hunter these gifts have rendered him famous, and gained him plaudits from admiring officers, noblemen, sportsmen, and competitors in the chase, and compelled the respect and fear of his implacable Indian foes."

Shooting from horseback was his best act. He would gallop around with an Indian riding fifteen yards ahead, tossing up balls which Cody would break in rapid succession. Again, the assistant would stand on the ground

and throw up two balls at once, Cody breaking them as he rode past at full tilt. On foot he broke clay pigeons with spectacular ease.

Interviewed on how to become a great shot, he said: "There is no rule that I know of. You see, the brain, the eye and the trigger finger must all work with the same impulse. When everything is just right if it's within range you kind of feel the object you shoot at rather than aim at it. This is especially true of shooting from the back of a galloping horse at a moving object. All of a sudden you feel rather than see that your gun is just right. Your finger seems to have touched the trigger of its own accord, and you know that you have made a hit. I couldn't teach a man how to do that, though if he had the stuff in him, he'd pick it up, just being along with me."

Soon there were jealous slurs. Mason Mitchell, a jack-of-all-trades actor who had done sharpshooting, came to Cody after the show one day and said that he would like to try the glass balls. Cody laughingly consented, as the story ran, and was astonished to see Mitchell break four balls out of five. Some time later the charge was published that Mitchell, visiting Cody's tent, had seen a tray full of shotged shells. Cody had hastily thrown a towel over them to hide them from his guests. "It's easy to shoot glass balls," said a friend of Mitchell, "with a rifle loaded with shotged shells, and that's how Cody does it."

Indignant retort was made in the press by Frank Richmond, the director of ceremonies for the show. He had been present on that occasion. Mitchell had not broken any glass balls, but Cody had for his benefit put clean perforations through coins tossed in the air. Why should Mr. Cody endanger his reputation for fairness

by shooting shot out of a rifle at glass balls two inches in diameter, thrown carefully in the air, when he had skill sufficient to kill a wasp on the wing at a distance of thirty feet, with a rifle ball—the wasp being not three feet from Richmond's nose at the time?

"It is a well-known fact," said Richmond, "that Mr. Cody performs his feats of marksmanship under the most difficult circumstances, riding at break-neck speed, and with flying objects. And I positively assert that the feats are accomplished with a 50-caliber Winchester rifle, shooting 50-caliber solid head cartridge, containing no shot, and furnished by the Union Metallic Cartridge Company."

Richmond's zeal seems to have been excessive. The actual truth is that Cody in breaking glass balls, did not use rifle bullets, but shotted shells.* The pellets made a pattern of about the same size as the glass ball at the usual range of twenty yards. According to Baker, it was just about as hard to get on the object at twenty yards with such shot as it would have been with a rifle ball.

Baker says further that in the first year of the show both Cody and Carver actually did use rifle bullets. After they got bills for broken glass from greenhouses eight or ten blocks away, they decided that for safety they must use shot, which would drop harmlessly within the grounds. There is no doubt about Cody's marksmanship when he was in his prime, and Baker himself had seen him split the edge of a playing card with a rifle bullet. Mrs. Cody said that her husband terrified

*On the authority of Johnny Baker, we know that he used a Winchester repeating rifle, smooth bored, 73 model, .44 caliber, and shells of .44 caliber $1\frac{1}{8}$ long, loaded with about 20 grains of black powder and $\frac{1}{4}$ oz. No. $7\frac{1}{2}$ chilled shot.

her by shooting coins out of the fingers of his own children.

One story of Cody as a practical marksman, which he himself enjoyed, concerned his efforts to kill a prairie chicken with a revolver. He fired once and missed, fired again and missed, and finally emptied all barrels, while his prey simply flapped about stupidly, unharmed. Angered, Cody hurled the empty revolver and hit the bird on the head, killing it instantly.

Adverse comment could make little progress against the enthusiasm with which the audiences watched the sure-shots. Even though there was more shooting than anything else on the program, the acts never lost their appeal, especially when done with such charm as Annie Oakley, Cody and young Johnny Baker displayed.

It is pleasant to notice a coincidence at the close of the season of 1886. Within one week there happened to appear in the New York papers two news items about gold watches. One announced that a deputy sheriff would sell at auction a gold watch weighing at least a pound, with an elaborate hammered design of buffalo heads with diamonds inset as eyes. It was a watch which the Prince of Wales had presented to Dr. W. F. Carver, the great marksman. Carver had pawned it and never redeemed it.

The other newspaper story said that Buffalo Bill had presented to Master Johnny Baker a gold watch inscribed:

Presented to Master Johnny Baker
 Champion Boy Shot of the World
 by his guardian
 William F. Cody
 Erastina, Aug. 18, 1886.

CHAPTER XX

TRIUMPH

"HAPPY? I'm as happy as the sun!" cried Buffalo Bill, standing at Erastina and counting twenty-five thousand people on the lot. "Just look at those grand stands. See the thousands of expectant countenances. Such a sight is enough to make any man a laughing hyena with happiness."

Triumph came swiftly after the despair of that first winter in New Orleans. In five months of 1885 the show played to a million people and made profits of one hundred thousand dollars.

Visitors found the Wild West camp almost as exciting as the performance. They were allowed to stroll about freely. They watched the grazing buffalo, the Texas steers, the mountain elk, the tough mules, the splendid horses on picket line. They could touch the stage-coach that had been "baptized in fire and blood." They could see how a hundred and fifty people lived under canvas—cowboys squatted on their haunches, Mexican vaqueros, Indians in their tepees, and among them John Nelson the squaw man, with his copper-colored wife and their handsome papooses. They could marvel at the dainty Annie Oakley mingling with these rough men, and be reassured by a glance at the rigid lips of Ma Whittaker, the wardrobe mistress, who looked like a New England schoolmarm.

In his tent Cody displayed the shriveled scalp of Yellow Hand, and in the arena he reenacted his duel with that warrior. In interviews, he would say that in the

disputes with the Indians the white man was to blame nine times out of ten. "I never shot an Indian but I regretted it afterward," he declared. General Sheridan was quoted to the effect that although Buffalo Bill had been the scourge of the red man, no Indian had ever charged him with a dishonorable act.

The feature of the camp was Sitting Bull, the great Sioux "chief" whose band had wiped out Custer only nine years before. Bull was neither chief nor son of a chief; he was a medicine man. But the crowds looked upon him with awe. Round-shouldered, with long arms, crooked legs, huge head and glittering black eyes, he sat before his tent and said, "How! How!" Some one compared his round red face to a pumpkin pie that had been sat upon, but most observers accepted Burke's dictum that Bull looked remarkably like Daniel Webster.

When not decorated with feathers and paint, his costume was a plush brocade waistcoat, black flowered pants, a scarlet tie, a printed shirt with the tails hanging down outside, and beaded moccasins, rubber-soled. He wore much dirty jewelry, and, although he was not a Catholic, a large crucifix. Favored callers sometimes could see him comb the black hair which reached to his waist, and braid it tightly into two plaits tied with rawhide.

He did not relish exhibition; it was said that he had joined the company because it would give him a chance to see his beloved Annie Oakley every day. His public, remembering the Custer massacre, elected him the villain of the piece. When he paraded around the arena in a crimson tunic, his head and back bristling with eagle feathers, he was usually loudly hissed.

"If they knew him better," says Johnny Baker, "they would have liked the old fellow." His week's salary was always gone before the next pay day; most of it

went home to his two wives and eleven children, and the rest was squandered on the newsboys, bootblacks and other youngsters who hung about his tent. He formally adopted Nate Salsbury as a member of his tribe, saying that if he were at home he would give him a pony, but here could only give him a pipe.

Hoping to make Bull more popular, the management arranged to have him interviewed through an interpreter. As translated and given out by the press agents, his remarks were always pointed: "Nobody knew who killed Custer; everybody fired at him. Custer was a brave warrior but made a mistake. The Indians honored him and did not scalp him. I fought for my people. My people said I was right. I will answer to my people. I will answer for the dead of my people. Let the pale-faces do the same on their side."

In Washington, when he had gone to call on the Great White Father, he had gazed at the great buildings and the crowds in the streets and said, "I wish I had known this when I was a boy." Again, "The white people are so many that if every Indian in the West killed one every step they took the dead would not be missed among you." Late in the season he announced, "I go back in four weeks and tell my people what I have seen. They will not go on the war-path again. I have learned much. Indian must keep quiet or die. The Great Father must protect us and give us justice."

At the end there was a dramatic meeting in a St. Louis hotel between Sitting Bull and General Carr, the veteran who had chased him through the Black Hills. The old medicine man barely nodded, and as Carr talked he grumbled monosyllables. But Cody spoke for him: "The Indian feels no resentment against a great foeman."

He was ready to return to his home. "The wigwam



Annie Oakley, "Little Sure Shot"



Indians in war dress, with Buffalo Bill in a gondola at Venice. A typical press agent picture

is a better place for the red man. He is sick of the houses, and the noises and the multitudes of men. When he goes out the white men gather around him. They stare at him. They poke fingers at him." Callers made little impression on him. "I can not remember their talks. Some were light, frivolous men, some were bad men. They were all the same to me. They talked much, but to my ears it was like the noise of the waters, which man can not stop."

When the show took up winter quarters at St. Louis, Sitting Bull went back to Standing Rock Agency. Although relieved to be rid of an unpopular feature, Cody put a good face on it by saying, "This trip will be conducive of great good, I think. It has given the chief an idea of the odds he has to fight against when he wars with the whites." Four years later those odds were to be fatal to the old medicine man.

General Sherman was present at the opening in the spring of 1886. It was a brilliant season. The show had grown to occupy twenty-six cars. Chief American Horse took the place of Sitting Bull; when asked what he thought of the East, he said, "I see so much that is wonderful and strange that I feel a wish sometimes to go out in the forest and cover my head with a blanket, so that I can see no more and have a chance to think over what I have seen." Burke informed the public that two of the Indians were so frightened by travel that they thought they were either bewitched or dead, and that he had to bind handkerchiefs about their eyes so that they could no longer see the wonders about them and could become calm again.

Another newcomer was Sergeant Bates, who had made such a nuisance of himself tramping about the country carrying an American flag and giving patriotic lectures

that Cody was complimented for having taken him off the public roads. In the arena he bore his banner happily amid cheers, and in the camp he maintained a tent which was the rendezvous for veterans of the Grand Army of the Republic.

Greater stress was laid upon riding acts. There were races between two girls from Colorado. The boys who rode the buckers were played up by name—Buck Taylor, Broncho Bill, Tom Clayton, Coyote Bill, Bridle Bill and Bill Bullock. It was explained that the horses "had not been trained to buck, but had simply not been trained not to buck."

Dynamite, a black mare, was the wickedest. When she turned a back somersault and fell with her four feet in the air, it had to be an agile rider who escaped a crushing. One day when Jim Mitchell was on her she went headlong into the fence and turned completely over, head first, landing on top of him. Mitchell was carried from the arena, bleeding. Soon Dynamite was led out again, blindfolded as usual, and who should appear but Jim Mitchell, pale and limping but grim. The stands roared, "No, no! Take her away!" But Mitchell mounted and fought her for fifteen minutes; she leaped and fell backward and groveled on the ground, but each time she came up he was straddling her. In the end he conquered, as every cowboy must, and while he waved his sombrero the stands rose and cheered.

No less than thirteen cowboys and Mexicans had been injured in riding the buckers, the press agents said, and there was no reason to doubt them. Cody himself was hurt while acting the duel with Yellow Hand. As he threw himself from his horse to give the finishing stroke his leg caught in the bridle of the Indian's horse and was severely wrenched. He was carried out, white with pain.

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In his tent he laughed, "That was the first time I was ever downed by an Indian."

In an interview on riding, Cody said, "How do we get such perfect seats? By gripping our horses with our knees and legs, sitting low and accommodating ourselves to every move of the animal. It becomes second nature after a while. I can tell every move that a horse intends making after I have been on his back five minutes." Bill Clayton, who often rode Dynamite, said more bluntly, "Anybody can ride a horse. Doggone it, just sit in the saddle and don't get skeart."

At each large city a few chosen guests enjoyed the famous Indian rib roasts. Sides of beef were roasted over heaps of wood coals, cut into chunks and passed about in tin basins. Each guest was given a sharply pointed stick, and informed that he must eat with his fingers. Only after he had struggled long did Cody take pity on him and pass knives and forks and napkins. The menu, as printed in the *Dramatic News*, was:

SOUP

Whiskey with Water

FISH

Whiskey Straight

ENTREE

Crackers with Pepper, Salt and Whiskey

ROAST

Chunks of Beef Ribs. Timber Sauce.

SALAD

Tomatoes au Naturel

DESSERT

Watermelon Beer Lemonade

Whiskey Champagne

Ambulances to order.

After dinner there was frolic. Once, in Montreal, a guest quietly suggested to Buck Taylor that he might lasso the only plug hat in the party, the hat being worn by a distinguished alderman. Buck stood off seventy feet and dropped his noose not only around the hat but at the same time around the young man who had made the suggestion. At New York Mr. Joseph B. Polk took delight in making the rounds of the Indians, shaking his bald head in their faces and asking them if they had ever taken a scalp like his. The Indians gave exhibitions with bows and arrows and Buffalo Bill showed how loudly he could crack the twenty-foot lash of a bull whip. Nate Salsbury tried it once and nearly cut his own throat with it.

Once in a while the papers would try to make a wild western type out of Salsbury. "He brought the air of the Sierras with him," said one eloquent paragraph. "There are scars on his face and a bunch on his sinewy brown neck where a bullet passed through. Every motion of his limbs and body conveys the idea of solidity and elasticity curiously but evenly compounded."

Salsbury would not be shown off; he became the owner of a ranch in Montana, but the only part he ever took in the show was the occasional introduction of a notable guest. Celebrities of every description favored the show with their presence—visiting royalty, Sir Henry Irving, Mark Twain, General Custer's widow and several of Cody's old commanders.

Mark Twain wrote a letter in which he said: "I have now seen your Wild West Show two days in succession, and have enjoyed it thoroughly. It brought vividly back the breezy, wild life of the great plains and the Rocky Mountains, and stirred me like a war song. Down to its smallest details, the show is genuine—cowboys, vaqueros,

Indians, stage coach, costumes and all; it is wholly free from sham and insincerity and the effects it produced upon me by its spectacles were identical with those wrought upon me a long time ago by the same spectacles on the frontier. Your pony expressman was as tremendous an interest to me yesterday as he was twenty-three years ago, when he used to come whizzing by from over the desert with his war news; and your bucking horses were even more painfully real to me as I rode one of those outrages once for nearly quarter of a minute. It is often said on the other side of the water that none of the exhibitions which we send to England are purely and distinctively American. If you will take the Wild West show over there you can remove that reproach."

So much was being said to the effect that the Wild West was not a humbug, "palming off upon a cheated people Yankee frauds," that at last old P. T. Barnum himself came all the way from Bridgeport to see it. It was the first time in forty years, Burke chortled, that Barnum had gone to any show not his own. He hobbled in, his foot swathed in bandages, for he had the gout.

Nate Salsbury introduced him to twenty thousand people, shouting words of sly praise: "A man of world-wide celebrity, whose name is known from the freezing zones of Greenland to the torrid regions of upper South America, the greatest showman of the world, Mr. Phineas T. Barnum."

After sitting through the entire performance, Barnum said magnanimously that he had found it very interesting. He observed with acumen that the virtue of the show was that it did not need spangles, being itself all life and movement, the effect of which was easily grasped by everybody.

"It is the coming show. Will I gobble it up? Oh,

no. Mr. Salsbury is going to take it to Europe. We have had a long talk over it."

The announcement that the Wild West would go to Europe was the climax of the gorgeous summer at Erastina, Staten Island, during which seventeen steamboats were used to bring the crowds that packed the twenty thousand seats. Then the next great stride was made—a winter season in the vast Madison Square Garden, arrangements for which were made with Forepaugh.

Steele Mackaye, engaged as stage-manager, transformed the Wild West Show into an indoor pageant called the *Drama of Civilization*. On Thanksgiving eve the show opened in the old Garden which it was to revisit for many years. Matt Morgan raised one end of the Garden twenty-five feet and painted vast gorgeous scenery. With a two-hundred horse-power wind machine Nelse Waldron produced a cyclone which blew down mining shacks and hurled passengers off the coach. Mackaye began the pageant with the primeval forest and introduced dramatic action and continuity.

It was no longer quite the old Wild West, at least in the eyes of one reviewer, who said: "Steele Mackaye has tamed it and transformed it into a circus of living pictures. He has not changed it into a drama, because there is no actor in the company, except Buffalo Bill, who says nothing, shoots badly and is kept pretty much in the background. . . . This new scheme to combine the show and the theatre and give the Wild West on a tank stage and the border drama without actors is not a success. . . . Adam Forepaugh, who has invested a great deal of money in the enterprise, advertises it like a circus. It used to be better than a circus, because the horses were supposed to run wild and the riders had to risk their limbs in mounting them; but now the animals

are cribbed, confined and have to be whipped into a display of a little animation. . . . We hope that Buffalo Bill, the Indians, the cowboys and the bisons will be let loose in the open again and that, when they go to Europe, all of Matt Morgan's scenery will be carefully left behind."

Mighty preparations were made for the invasion of England. The tireless John Burke began to collect letters from army officers in order to convince the skeptical British public that Buffalo Bill was a genuine scout and soldier. It is noticeable that almost all of Cody's testimonial letters were dated in the last months of 1886 and the first of 1887. They were from Generals Sherman, Sheridan, Carr, Crook, Merritt, Bankhead, Emory, Fry and King, and from Colonels Royal, Forsyth and Dudley. The letters were highly satisfactory, except that most of them referred to "Mr." Cody, for until now he had been no more than a civilian scout. This would never do. For fifteen years he had been using the title "Honorable," based upon his election to the Nebraska legislature. But this was not so good for use abroad.

By this time Nebraska was very proud of her distinguished citizen. His success had inspired the comment back home that when Nebraska reviewed her millionaires, the name of Cody would be near the head of the list, that he would be to Nebraska what Barnum had been to Connecticut. The governor of Nebraska gladly came to the front with a commission dated March 8, 1887, "reposing special trust and confidence in the integrity, patriotism and ability of the Hon. William F. Cody, on behalf and in the name of the State, do hereby appoint and commission him as Aide-de-Camp on my Staff, with the rank of Colonel." This National Guard

commission gave Cody the title which he used for the rest of his life; to his friends he was always thereafter the "Colonel."*

Another important step was the incorporation of the Wild West company, taking over all the property of the partnership. It was a simple procedure. One hundred shares of stock were issued, of which Cody and Salsbury each held thirty-five; the remaining minority was divided among three other friends—Frank C. Maeder, Milton E. Milner and William D. Guthrie. Significant of the strong vein of sentiment in the two partners was the fact that they met to sign their agreement on February 26, 1887,—the forty-first anniversary of Cody's birth,—and held their first stockholders' meeting and election of directors two days later, February twenty-eighth,—the forty-first birthday of Nate Salsbury.

A similar sentiment inspired them to charter for the voyage to Europe the steamer *State of Nebraska*, named for the commonwealth which had honored Cody. On April first the Wild West sailed away.

"A certain feeling of pride came over me," Cody's autobiography says in one comprehensive sentence, "when I thought of the good ship on whose deck I stood, and that her cargo consisted of early pioneers and rude, rough riders from that section, and of the wild horses of the same district, buffalo, deer, elk and antelope—the king game of the prairie—together with over one hundred representatives of that savage foe that had been compelled to submit to a conquering civilization and were now accompanying me in friendship, loyalty and

*The excellent use which Burke made in England of both "Honorable" and "Colonel" so piqued Sanger, the British circus man who had to compete with the Wild West, that he went to the extreme of inventing for himself the title "Lord George Sanger."

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peace, five thousand miles from their homes, braving the dangers of the to them great unknown sea, now no longer a tradition, but a reality—all of us combined in an exhibition intended to prove to the center of the old world civilization that the vast region of the United States was finally and effectively settled by the English-speaking race."

A few weeks later the plainsman who, as he said with candor, would once have thought it a big thing to meet the mayor of Leavenworth in a friendly way, was cracking jokes with the Prince of Wales.

CHAPTER XXI

THE CONQUEST OF EUROPE.

WHEN Queen Victoria came to a command performance of Buffalo Bill's Wild West the day was memorable for more than one reason.

"For the first time in history since the Declaration of Independence," exclaimed John Burke, "a sovereign of Great Britain saluted the Star Spangled Banner—and that banner was carried by Buffalo Bill."

In that glittering year of the Queen's Jubilee, royalty flocked to London. The Wild West had to bring a monarch of its own. Sitting Bull having gone back to his people, Buffalo Bill came to England with Ogila-sa, or Red Shirt. They advertised Red Shirt as Chief of the Sioux nation, explaining that he had "intelligently accepted the situation since being conquered." Red Shirt met Victoria on terms of equality. Just so, it was recalled, had good Queen Bess received the dusky Princess Pocahontas.

To Cody and Salsbury the event marked the beginning of fifteen years of huge popularity. The royal visit, they knew, "was enough to secure the attendance of every person in London who desired to be It." It was a stroke of fortune, for on the opening day in London the show had stood with one hundred and sixty-five thousand dollars at stake.

To put on shipboard this rip-snorting aggregation from the western plains and set it down in ancient London was in itself a daring venture. Scores of the Indians were fresh from the Pine Ridge Agency and had never

been in a show before. Some of them had a tribal belief that any red man who sought to cross the ocean would waste away and die. They had been seasick, as had Cody himself—"sick as a cow with hollow-horn," he said. There had been severe storms. The ship had wallowed helplessly for hours with a broken propeller. At the last minute there had been trouble with the British authorities about bringing in animals and ammunition.

Even before the official opening the Prince and Princess of Wales had come to see the show. The buildings were only half built and the track unfinished, and Cody was nervous because he had a hundred new ponies that had never been ridden or shot over. But the very rawness of grounds and performance had delighted the good-humored Prince. When a hundred Indians burst from their ambuscade and tore about the arena, he leaped to his feet with shining eyes, and Buffalo Bill said to himself, "Cody, you've fetched 'em."

He had. They told the Queen that it was something worth seeing. She sent a "command" that it be shown to her in one hour. She arrived with the princes and princesses, a military escort in bright uniforms and a bevy of ladies-in-waiting, who, in Burke's phrase, formed "a veritable pottiere of living flowers about the temporary throne." To the admiring American public Burke reported that this was Victoria's first appearance in public after her long retirement.*

Before the show the American flag was borne round the arena by a horseman, while Frank Richmond, the orator, bellowed that it was "an emblem of peace and friendship to all the world." As the standard-bearer

*For months past she had been attending concerts, laying foundation stones and opening exhibitions.

curveted past the royal box, the Queen rose and bowed deeply. Officers saluted, noblemen doffed their hats, and from the arena went up the cowboy yell.

The scene opened on the primeval forest, with wild animals in their native lairs, and the Indian as he was before the white man came. A friendly dance. A courier, giving warning in the sign language of the approach of a hostile tribe. With Indian whoops the wild spectacle was in full swing.

Prairie fire and stampede, the landing of the Pilgrims, Pocahontas saving John Smith's life, the massacre of Custer, the cowboy band, two of the instruments mounted on buffalo, the stage-coach perilously pursued, a tornado in the mountains, all so fascinated the Queen that she quite forgot her limit of one hour. She sat through every stunt that these extraordinary Americans could show.

At the close she sent for Buffalo Bill, and the tall graceful plainsman in buckskins and sombrero was equal to the occasion. He presented Annie Oakley, and the Queen said, "You are a very, very clever little girl." Two Indian women brought up their brown papooses to be petted. Finally, Red Shirt, playing his part of mighty ruler in his own land, stalked forward in gaudy feathers and war paint, and spoke to the Queen with level dignity. Through the interpreter he told her that he had crossed the big water just to see her and that he "felt glad."

Nothing could stop the Wild West after that.

The show was in London under contract as an annex to Whitley's American Exhibition, and that exhibition was a dismal failure. The London newspapers called it "an exhibition of dental surgery by distinguished Americans." But across the bridge which connected it with the Wild West, Cody and Salsbury began to pack

them in, twenty, thirty and forty thousand a day. Britons came, not only to see the show, but also to rove through the camp, staring at the curious animals, at Buffalo Bill's trophies, at the tepees, at Red Shirt and Little Bull and Cut Meat and Poor Dog, and at John Nelson, the bearded squaw man, with his progeny. They read on the program Burke's solemn pronouncement that the cowboy "is not infrequently a college-bred man, who has adopted this strange calling from pure love of adventure, and many of the cattle kings of America have risen from cowboys, among them the Marquis de Mores, son of the Duke of Vallambrosa." They read that Buffalo Bill "has passed through every phase of border life until he reached the position of 'Chief of Scouts of the United States Army,' and in that capacity he has been the trusted comrade and friend of the most famous generals and Indian fighters of the United States. . . . He owns a large ranch on the North Platte River, in Nebraska, has been a member of the State Legislature, and is now colonel and aide-de-camp on the staff of the Governor of that State."

Soon a second command was sent by the Queen. She desired a special performance for the royal guests who had come to her Jubilee—the Kings of Denmark, Belgium, Greece and Saxony, the Crown Princes of Germany, Austria and Sweden, Grand Duke Michael of Russia and many another. With the princesses, the children, the lords and the ladies, they made an audience of three hundred such as was never assembled before or since. The Prince said to Cody that it contained more royalty than he had ever seen at any one time and more than were likely to be seen together again.

There was one gorgeous feat of publicity. The old Deadwood coach, as it was chased under fire by Indians,

held four crowned heads, ducking slightly, while the Prince of Wales clung on the driver's box. To perpetuate the publicity an anecdote was told and retold for many years. The Prince of Wales remarked, "Colonel, you never held four kings like these, did you?" ("For," Cody would say, "I had taught him the great American game of draw poker.") Cody's pat reply was: "I've held four kings, but four kings and the Prince of Wales makes a royal flush, and that's unprecedented." The joke was obscure to the four kings in the coach. "I almost pitied Wales when he tried to explain, in three languages."

Buffalo Bill became the lion of the London season. It was "the first year of the American invasion," and the handsomest American of them all made the most of it. He found occasion, as the *Times* noted, to go everywhere, to see everything and to be seen by all the world. He was wined and dined and in return gave Indian breakfasts and roast-rib dinners, cooked in the open and eaten with the fingers by such of the distinguished guests as cared to emulate the aborigine. He said, "My genial hosts' capacity for the liquid refreshments would have made me envy them in the '60's, and led me to suspect that there might be accomplishments in England in which even western pioneers are excelled."

Two and a half million people saw the show in London alone during the summer. The close of the American Exhibition in the fall was marked by a conference of representative Englishmen and Americans to endorse a Court of Arbitration for settling disputes between the two countries. The *London Times* commented that "Colonel Cody has done his part in bringing America and England nearer together. . . . Colonel Cody can achieve no greater triumph, even if he some

day realizes the design attributed to him of running the Wild West Show within the classic precincts of the Colosseum at Rome. *Civilisation itself consents to march onward in the train of Buffalo Bill.*"

There was some dissent. "On the whole," said one society writer, "I cannot but consider it a mistake for Lord Beresford to have given the Yankee showman a mount on the box seat of his drag at the Coaching Club meet. *Noblesse oblige*, there is a want of congruity in the companionship of an illustrious officer who fills an important position in the Government with a gentleman chiefly famed as an adroit scalper of Red Indians. I do not blame Buffalo Bill; my censure is confined to the fashionable throng who pay their devotion at such a shrine." And James Russell Lowell, writing to Professor Norton to explain the Cody phenomenon, said sourly: "I think the true key to this eagerness for lions—even of the poodle sort—is the dullness of the average English mind."

If Buffalo Bill was a roaring lion, Annie Oakley was a graceful lioness. Her riding habits created new styles. Her tent was stacked with flowers. She was invited to appear at smart gun clubs. Society women took shooting lessons from her. The Prince of Wales gave her a medal and exchanged inscribed photographs with her.

She had heard stories of girls who tried to flirt with the Prince. But at their very first meeting, after he had applauded her shooting, she had been boldly original. She had been brought forward to be presented. "An English born lady would not have dared to have done as I did—they must speak to Royalty according to the station of the Royal personages. The Prince's hand came over the low front of the box as they all rose to their feet. I ignored it and quickly proffered my hand

to his Princess. She did not offer the tips of her fingers, expecting me to kneel and kiss them, but took my hand gently in her own, saying: 'What a wonderful little girl.' '*

His Highness was not displeased by the snub. He even proposed that Annie shoot a match against Grand Duke Michael of Russia, who fancied himself as a marksman. This worried Cody, who had had his own experience with a Russian grand duke. He thought that it would never do for Annie to defeat a royal personage. Nate Salisbury maintained that of course it would do, and in fact, must be done. John Burke was torn between his passion for publicity and his reverence for princes.

Great interest attached to the Duke because he was supposed to be in London for the purpose of taking a British princess to wife. When Annie beat him badly before a noble audience, as she herself wrote: "The papers that were against his courting expedition were pink with sarcastic accounts of this dashing cavalier who was outdone at his own game by a little girl from America, of this Lochinvar who was no match for short dresses and whose warlike career faded before the onset of the American kindergarten. Whether all this had anything to do with what followed, I of course can only guess. But about that time the engagement was broken off and the opposition papers announced that 'Annie Oakley of the magic gun' had won two matches at once from the Grand Duke—the shooting trophy and the hand of the Princess."

The very popularity of Annie Oakley led to jealousy. When the London season ended and the show moved to

*The quotations are from her journal as published in *Annie Oakley, Woman-at-Arms*, by Courtney Ryley Cooper.

Manchester for the winter, she left the company to give exhibitions of her own. Unhappily, it was during this brief estrangement that Cody's autobiography was brought up to date. As a result, his account of the European tour did not mention her by name, and gave a description of her presentation which differed from her own:

"Our lady shot experts, on being presented at the finish, committed the little solecism of offering to shake hands with the Princess, for, be it known, feminine royalty offers the hand back uppermost which the person presented is expected to lift with finger tips and salute with the lips. However, the Princess was quick to perceive and she solved the situation by taking the proffered hands, somewhat shaded with gunpowder, and shaking them heartily."

Cody must have regretted that his most widely-read book made this slighting reference to the well-loved Little Missy. Doubtless it was dictated by press agent motives. For just at that time Annie threw in her lot with Gordon Lillie, Pawnee Bill, who was running his own "Frontier Exhibition."

That was hazardous competition for Lillie, who had started with the Wild West as an interpreter. After their brilliant year abroad, Cody and Salsbury had sailed home as conquering heroes. Their welcome was described by the *New York World*:

"The harbor probably has never witnessed a more picturesque scene than that of yesterday, when the 'Persian Monarch' steamed up the quarantine. Buffalo Bill stood on the captain's bridge, his tall and striking figure clearly outlined, and his long hair waving in the wind; the gayly painted and blanketed Indians leaned over the ship's rail; the flags of all nations fluttered from the masts and con-

necting cables. The cowboy band played 'Yankee Doodle' with a vim and enthusiasm which faintly indicated the joy felt by everybody connected with the 'Wild West' over the sight of home."

General Sherman wrote Cody a letter in which he said: "You have caught one epoch of this country's history, and have illustrated it in the very heart of the modern world—London—and I want you to feel that on this side of the water we appreciate it."

Public appreciation was made evident by heavy gate receipts as the show took up its stand at Staten Island and later toured southward to Richmond. Except for the hole left by the loss of Annie Oakley, there was but one vulnerable spot in the mighty Wild West. Cody's associates were beginning to fear that his head had been turned by his personal vogue abroad, and to worry about the high zest with which he went roistering through the land, flanked by boon companions of both sexes.

Never did Cody make any secret of his drinking. It was always a good joke between him and the newspaper men. He had a favorite story to prove that his wife, although a temperance advocate, actually encouraged him to drink. One night at North Platte, he said, he had made a good resolution, had gone home cold sober, approached his door with steady step, and called in a quiet, gentlemanly voice, "Let me in, Lulu." His wife would not believe it was he and refused to open. He went back to the sutler's store, got drunk as a lord, and at four in the morning, as he would say, "I fell up against the door like a bale of hay and shouted. 'Oh, Willy, is that you? I'm so glad you're home,' said my wife, and she let me in."

Against Pawnee Bill, Salsbury and Burke used all the weapons known in the fierce warfare of the showman.

THE CONQUEST OF EUROPE

They blanketed his paper on the billboards, and announced ahead of him, "Wait for the big show. Buffalo Bill is coming." But Annie Oakley was a fighter herself. As her biographer, Courtney Ryley Cooper, says, she "performed, on horseback, on foot, at press agent stunts; she gave interviews, she displayed the innumerable cups and medals which had come to her as the results of her shooting prowess both in America and abroad. She had become the backbone of the whole show, the reason for its existence, the recommendation for it. And she drew the crowds."

The Wild West, however, did not have to trouble itself unduly about domestic competition, for a Continental tour was being planned. There was to be the great Exposition Universale in Paris, and Cody had already voiced publicly his ambition to put on the Wild West Show within the hallowed Coliseum at Rome. A poem had been made about that:

I'll take my stalwart Indian braves
Down to the Coliseum,
And the old Romans from their graves
Will all arise to see 'em.
Prepare triumphal cars for me,
And purple thrones to sit on,
For I've done more than Julius C——
He could not down the Briton!
Cæsar and Cicero shall bow,
And ancient warriors famous,
Before the myrtle-wreathed brow,
Of Buffalo Williamus.

After less than a year at home, the Wild West took ship again in the spring of 1889. It was a day of torren-

tial rain. The buffalo were hoisted aboard with their shaggy manes plastered to their wet necks. Cowboys were woebegone and the Indians were pictures of gloom. The old Deadwood coach stood on the deck leaking at every crevice until pools of water soaked its sacred cushions. But Cody was happy, for he and Annie Oakley were friends once more and she was going back with the show.

They landed at Havre in May, and played six months at Paris, or as Burke put it, "the capital of the how-truly-named La Belle France." The president of France and the American minister and Queen Isabella of Spain were at the opening. Old Parisians said that they had never seen at any show such a splendid representation of all Paris. The *New York Herald* printed cabled descriptions of the gowns worn by the ladies.

Things American became the new Parisian fad. "Fashionable young men," Cody recalled with pride, "bought American and Mexican saddles for their rides in the Bois. Cowboy hats appeared everywhere on the street. Relics from the plains and mountains, bows, moccasins, and Indian baskets sold like hot cakes in the souvenir stores." Dukes and counts and barons thronged to the great breakfasts and dinners which Cody gave.

Rosa Bonheur practically lived at the camp, making studies of Indian life and of the animals, in particular the Percheron draft horses which were never seen in the arena. It was then that she painted her portrait of Buffalo Bill mounted on his favorite steed. Reproductions of the picture became a regular feature of the show advertising, while the original was shipped home to North Platte, where no doubt it was a great comfort to Mrs. Cody, who never went along on her husband's brilliant European tours.

Another royal visitor who came to the show was the Shah of Persia. Nate Salisbury drew a pen-picture of the event: "The Mayor of Neuilly came to me and asked as a particular favor that he be allowed to receive the Shah, as we were in his bailiwick. I readily assented, and in return he said he would take much pleasure in presenting Cody and myself to the Shah. Cody got into his buckskins, I pushed myself into a spike-tailed coat, and soon the mayor appeared. Covered with decorations, spattered with medals and resplendent in the uniform of a Major General of the French Army, he was calculated to make the most extravagant picture of Solomon look like a soiled deuce in a new pack. The equerries of the Republic dashed into the grounds followed by a state carriage in which was seated the most unimpressive man I ever saw. The postilions stopped the horses, the footman flung the carriage doors open, and the Shah descended to the ground, where he was met by the Mayor, who addressed him. . . . The Shah never stopped to hear the finish of the speech, but waved him away with petulant disdain and passed into the grand stand. And to this day neither Cody nor I has ever been presented to the Shah of Persia. The Mayor, strutting and fuming, strode away."

At the end of the Paris engagement the show began its first long European tour, covering southern France, Spain, Italy, Austria-Hungary and Germany. The press agents were as resourceful as ever. At Barcelona the Wild West debarked "on the very spot where Christopher Columbus landed from his caravels upon his return after discovering America." A band of Indians was photographed before the statue of the explorer. "There," said Burke, "stands our advance agent, four hundred years ahead of us." One of the braves, gazing at the

THE MAKING OF BUFFALO BILL

great figure, said in excellent English, "It was a damned bad day for us when he discovered America."

The winter at Barcelona was frightful. Typhoid and the Spanish influenza were raging, the city was in quarantine and the show played to meager houses. Frank Richmond and seven Indians died and Annie Oakley was dangerously ill.

At last they were able to go on to Italy, where the losses were quickly recovered. The Indians dutifully staged a war dance in the shadow of Mt. Vesuvius, and put on their war-bonnets to ride in gondolas at Venice. The Prince of Sermonetta brought from his stud some wild horses which he said nobody could ride. The laughing cowboys roped, saddled and rode them. At Verona the show was given in the amphitheater erected by Diocletian in 290 A. D., and Burke became lyric: "Hoary antiquity and bounding youth kissed each other under the sunny Italian skies!" Buffalo Bill inspected the Coliseum, but regretfully stated that he had to give up his hope of performing there, because the historic ruin was not only too dilapidated but also too small.

Meanwhile, back home, a frontier rhymester indited in the *Omaha Bee* a ballad about Bill:

He used to be a judge of "horns," when poured in a tin
cup

And left the wine to tenderfeet and men who felt "way
up";

Perhaps he cracks a bottle now, perhaps he's had his
fill,

Who cares, Bill Cody was a scout, and all the world
knows Bill.

THE CONQUEST OF EUROPE

He didn't wear biled linen then, or flash up diamond rings,

The royalties he dreamed of then were only paste-board kings,

But those who sat behind the Queens were apt to get their fill:

In the days when Cody was a scout and all the world knew Bill.

On the anniversary of the coronation of Pope Leo XIII the whole company went to the Vatican to attend the ceremonies. In full war-paint and all the panoply that the wardrobe chests afforded, the Wild West lined up along the corridor down which the Pope was borne to the throne. Cody, in dress coat with his long hair flowing over his shoulders,—perhaps the only man who could ever wear such a combination without being ludicrous,—towered a full head above the rest. His Holiness gazed intently at the great hero, and spread his hands in token of blessing.

There was some uneasiness lest the Indians might let out a whoop of approval, but John Burke, a devout Catholic, had schooled them well. After they withdrew to the courtyard, however, and saw the Swiss guards drawn up in their extraordinary uniforms with their halberds and two-handed swords, the red men could not be restrained from guttural laughter. Their mirth died when they returned to camp. An Indian, left behind because of illness, had died in their absence.

This had strange effect upon their superstitious minds. Rocky Bear, who was now their leader, said that the Great Spirit had betrayed them. They called a council and, sending for Burke, asked why the representative of God had not protected their comrade while they were

gone to his palace. Burke in all his eloquence could find no convincing answer and the Indians remained suspicious. The seeds of trouble had been sown.

As the show moved through Germany, reports began to reach America that there were starvation and cruelty in the Wild West camp. Several Indians arrived at New York, traveling steerage, complaining of their treatment. The *Herald* said, "For months past the warriors have been straggling back in groups of three and five, sick and disgusted with their treatment while abroad. Fully one-third of the original band have returned to this country." There was talk of an investigation. John Burke raved in his best form: "notoriety-seeking busybodies"—"the forked tongue of human serpents, who, without rhyme, truth or reason have tried to stain a fair record."

The public was concerned, because Indian hearts were bad that autumn. Out in Dakota the wily Sitting Bull, graduate of Buffalo Bill's show, was making medicine again, medicine that was to prove bitter brew for the Sioux and for himself. Under an agreement reached with some of the Indians, eleven million acres between the Missouri River and the Black Hill had been thrown open for white settlement and the tribes driven into smaller reservations. Sitting Bull and others cried out angrily at the encroachment. Rations at the agencies were scanty and adulterated. And while discontent was fermenting, a Messiah appeared in Nevada to prophesy that the red man was to be restored to his inheritance.

With the mysterious speed of Indian communications, the gospel fanned out eastward. On every reservation the ghost dance beat the earth, day and night.

It began to be said that the rumors that Buffalo Bill's Indians were maltreated were aggravating the situation. Two United States consuls inspected the camp at Berlin

and issued a signed statement that "they are certainly the best looking and apparently the best fed Indians we have ever seen."

Buck Taylor, King of the Cowboys, quit the show in Germany and came home to start a show of his own. Burke cabled to the New York papers, "Please mention that stray mavericks are not missed from this herd." When Buck landed in New York he behaved like the gentleman that he was and said stoutly that he knew of no cruelty to the Indians in Europe.

At last it became necessary to announce that the Indians themselves would be sent home to give the lie to slander and "to show the refining and ennobling influence which European travel had on them."

"The Indian folds his tents," Burke cabled, "and follows on the brine's deep blue the trail of Columbus, Vespucci, De Soto and Hendrik Hudson. Thence wandering westward he braves the bleak blizzards of the Bad Lands of Dakota . . . and will imbibe in his wild native solitude those graces and virtues that contact with modern civilization in the intellectual centres of Europe may have blunted."

Rumors of an Indian outbreak grew still more insistent. The return of Buffalo Bill's Indians, looking very fit and contented, was hailed as a possible aid in averting the crisis. Then unexpectedly Cody himself landed in New York.

Interviewed, he said that he did not think it likely that the Indians would start a war just when winter was coming and that he was planning a long hunting trip. Later publicity, however, dramatized Buffalo Bill's timely return, and said that the pilot shouted as he came over the ship's side, "Colonel, there's a big Indian war started! I guess you'll be needed out there!"

CHAPTER XXII

THE LAST INDIAN WAR

THE ghost dance was a religious rite. Military and bureaucratic minds either could not or would not believe that it was nothing more. There was just enough ill temper among the Indians and just enough evil in the heart of old Sitting Bull to lend color to the fears of an uprising. In consequence, the white man committed the crowning blunder of two centuries of blundering with the Indians. And Buffalo Bill had a chance to try his last and perhaps his boldest exploit.

Wovoka, the youthful medicine man who had arisen among the Paiutes in 1888, preached the doctrine that if the Indian would practise certain dances and ceremonies his dead brothers would be resurrected. Chiefs from the Dakota agencies made pilgrimages to Nevada to meet the Messiah.

Lone Wolf gave a translation of what the Great Spirit had said to one of them: "He told me that the earth was now bad and worn out; that we needed a new dwelling-place where the rascally whites could not disturb us. He further instructed me to return to my people, the Sioux, and say to them that if they would be constant in the dance, and pay no attention to the whites, he would shortly come to their aid. If the high-priests would make for the dancers medicine-shirts and pray over them, no harm could come to the wearer; that the bullets of any whites that desired to stop the Messiah Dance would fall to the ground without doing any one harm, and the person firing such shots would drop dead. He said that

he had prepared a hole in the ground filled with hot water and fire for the reception of all white men and non-believers. With these parting words I was commanded to return to earth."

At camps near the agencies the high priests of the Sioux drove their people through the incessant agonies of the dance. Young men prepared by sitting in lodges so tightly sealed that no air could enter and no smoke or steam escape, while water was poured upon hot stones. When they could stand the vapor no longer they came out streaming with sweat and entered the dance. In great circles, pounded as hard as a cement floor, five hundred at a time would jump backward and forward, up and down, shouting, moaning, sobbing, gripping hands, until they fell to the ground writhing, or rushed off madly.

Sitting Bull became one of the most fanatic dancers. There is little doubt that he saw in the new religion a means of bolstering his own waning power. Older Indians like himself were brooding over the white man's theft of their land and over rations, which were not only bad, but, because of crop failures, had also been reduced until there was actual hunger in the lodges.

As long ago as June the agent at Standing Rock, James McLaughlin, had urged that Bull be imprisoned. Forbidden to leave the reservation, the old medicine man had sent for Kicking Bear, a Minniconjou who had seen the Messiah, and from him had learned the new revelation. Thereafter Sitting Bull fasted and tranced and danced so hard that he wore himself to a shadow.

Kicking Bear was banished by the police in mid-October. That very night Sitting Bull ostentatiously broke the peace-pipe which he had kept intact for nine years, and told the gasping dancers, "I am ready to fight and would die for this new religion if need be."

The agent was certain that the new religion was rubbish. He believed, furthermore, that Sitting Bull knew it to be rubbish. For several weeks Bull failed to come in to the post to draw his rations. This looked as if he meant mischief. McLaughlin went to Bull's camp, forty miles out on the Grand River, watched the wild dancing and met the old man, stark naked but for breechcloth and moccasins, bony-thin and surly.

"Look here, Sitting Bull," stormed McLaughlin, "your preaching and practise of this absurd Messiah doctrine is causing a great deal of uneasiness among the Indians of the reservation, and you should stop it at once." Bull argued but did not recant. The agent recommended that no Indian who persisted in ghost dancing should get any more rations, but this strategy was not approved in Washington.

Troops poured into the agency. Three thousand Indians, among them Short Bull and Kicking Bear, broke for the Bad Lands, not to prepare for a fight, but in a frantic stampede to avoid a fight. At any moment, however, Sitting Bull might strike camp and join them.

At this juncture Buffalo Bill leaped into the limelight. Visiting General Miles at headquarters in Chicago, he announced that he was in favor of arresting Sitting Bull. "Of all the bad Indians," he said, "Sitting Bull is the worst." Two days later he got off the train at Bismarck, accompanied by his two old comrades, Pony Bob Haslam, the one-time express rider, and Dr. Frank Powell. It was Cody's first appearance in the Indian country since 1876. Bismarck was the very station at which he had taken the railway to the East, fourteen years earlier, bearing the scalp of Yellow Hand.

He drove into the agency in a livery stable rig and announced that he was going out to get Sitting Bull.

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Fresh from the courts of Europe, he had chatted with queens, played poker with princes, given a dinner for Gladstone and been blessed by the Pope. Surely he could handle the old medicine man who had once traveled with his show.

"I can't let you go," said McLaughlin, "you would be killed before you got half way there."

But Cody flashed an order reading as follows:

Confidential

Headquarters Division of the Missouri

Chicago, Ill. Nov. 24, 1890.

Col. Cody.

You are hereby authorized to secure the person of Sitting Bull and deliver him to the nearest Commanding Officer of U. S. Troops, taking a receipt and reporting your action.

NELSON A. MILES

Major General

Comd Division.

He also had a visiting card, on the back of which was scrawled in pencil:

Com'd'g officers will please give Col. Cody transportation for himself and party and any protection he may need for a small party.

NELSON A. MILES

This was too sweeping to be disregarded. McLaughlin had to let Cody go on what he said he knew "would be the most dangerous undertaking of my career." A report that he set out on this final exploit clad in a dress suit, silk stockings and patent leather shoes was indig-

nantly denied. They got him a span of mules and a spring-wagon, which he loaded with gay presents for Sitting Bull and his two squaws. Whether he took with him one or several companions is not clear; certainly he had no military protection.

He had no weapon, not even a revolver. It was safer to go unarmed. He was relying upon his gifts, and especially upon a large quantity of candy. "If they'd let him alone," says Johnny Baker, "he'd have captured Sitting Bull with an all-day sucker."

But McLaughlin rushed to the telegraph office and wired to Washington:

William F. Cody (Buffalo Bill) has arrived here with commission from General Miles to arrest Sitting Bull. Such a step at present is unnecessary and unwise, as it will precipitate a fight which can be averted. . . . Request General Miles' order to Cody be rescinded. . . .

Ten miles out from the post, jogging along behind his mules, wrapped in heavy robes against the bitter November wind, Cody was overtaken by a hurrying scout. An order had come direct from President Harrison. He must turn back. He did so, obedient but disgruntled. Disposing of the intended gifts, he left the post, and put in an expense account for \$505.60, which the quartermaster honored.

McLaughlin boasted, "My telegram saved to the world that day a royal good fellow and most excellent showman." Lieutenant Chadwick, who was on the ground, said, "Cody's plan was one of the most daring things I ever heard of." But men in gold lace at Washington complained openly that General Miles had reflected upon

the regular army officers by entrusting such a mission to an outsider.

Cody did not consider himself an outsider. Hiding his chagrin manfully, he declared, "If it was spring there would be war. If the Messiah doesn't get a move on himself the snow will blow through his whiskers so rapidly that he will forget to materialize." From White Beaver's home in LaCrosse, Wisconsin, where he was recovering from the effects of his cold ride, he announced, "I am hourly expecting orders to get to the front."

He always believed that if he had got through to Sitting Bull there would have been none of the bloodshed that followed. President Harrison, he said, told him later that he regretted having ordered the recall.

Certainly McLaughlin's strategy was no better. Sitting Bull finally sent a letter in to the agency. Out of its incoherent phrases this warning rang: "I wish no one to come to me in my prayers with gun or knife." On the heels of this came a warning that Bull was all ready to jump the reservation, to join the young men gathered in the Bad Lands.

Forty-three Indian police, reconstructed red men in blue coats with brass buttons and gleaming badges, rode out to arrest him. If he should make the slightest resistance, he was to be killed, for all concerned would be happier if this arch trouble-maker were put out of the way.

At dawn on December fifteenth the Indian police crept out of the bushes and walked into Sitting Bull's cabin. He was calm enough and seemed ready to go peaceably. But if he was to be taken to the agency he wanted to put on his best store clothes and he wanted to ride his best horse. They waited while he dressed. When they led him out to mount his horse they faced a milling mob

of a hundred and sixty ghost dancers, armed and angry.

Bull's son, Crow Foot, yelled, "You call yourself a brave man. And now you give yourself up—to Indians in blue uniforms!"

Stung by the taunt, the father began a harangue. Then with sudden and unwonted daring, he drew himself up and screamed an order. Two of the ghost dancers fired point blank at the police. First Lieutenant Bull Head the First Sergeant Shave Head fell. At the echo Second Sergeant Red Tomahawk fired from behind. His bullet killed Sitting Bull instantly.

Before the ghost dancers had been chased to the timber, eight of them and six of the police were dead. Every man of the fourteen who gave his life on either side in this, almost the last Indian fight, was an Indian!

On Christmas Day Kicking Bear led a skirmish on Battle Creek in which several were killed and on December twenty-ninth there was the bloody affair at Wounded Knee. That was not a battle, but a massacre, perpetrated by white soldiers.

The stampeded bands were persuaded to come in to Wounded Knee Creek and lay down their arms. While they were filing in between the lines of troops and giving up their rifles, one young brave resisted. An officer grabbed his gun; it went off, and the nervous soldiers turned on the Hotchkiss guns.

A rain of explosive shells mowed down men, women and children. Hand to hand fighting began, white man and red alike yelling, cursing and firing blindly. The Indians ran back to their strongholds across the creek. Before the maniac pursuit was ended, forty-three soldiers were dead, and the snowy field was strewn with the bodies of two hundred Indians, two-thirds of them squaws and papooses.



Photo by D. F. Barry, New York

Sitting Bull and Cody. "Foes in '76, Friends in '85"



The Cavalry Maze, in which riders of many nations took part in the arena of the Wild West Show

THE LAST INDIAN WAR

In misery and terror, the fugitives who escaped made camp and waited. General Miles surrounded them and renewed the efforts to coax them in.

Within a few days Buffalo Bill appeared on the scene again, and again he was well armed with credentials. He held a commission from Governor Thayer of Nebraska as "Aide-de-Camp-in-Chief on the staff of the Commander-in-Chief with the rank of Brigadier General."*

One of his show Indians called to pay his respects, and asked: "You big general now, Bill?"

"Yes, I'm a general now," said Cody.

"Big general same as Crook, Terry?"

"No. I'm a general in the national army."

"M'lish!" exclaimed the Indian. "Oh, hell!"

Another credential which Cody held was an order from the governor, which read:

You will proceed to the scene of the Indian troubles, and communicate with General Miles.

You will in addition to the special service referred to, please visit the different towns, if time permit, along the line of the Elkhorn Rail-Road, and use your influence to quiet excitement and remove apprehensions upon the part of the people.

Please call upon General Colby, and give him your views as to the probability of the Indians breaking through the cordon of regular troops; your superior

*Although this commission which gave him the temporary rank of General, was almost certainly new, it is curious that when Burke reproduced it in facsimile in the program of the 'Wild West Show, it was dated November 23, 1889—exactly one year previous to Cody's arrival in Nebraska. The probable explanation is that the obliging governor predated it.

knowledge of Indian character and mode of warfare, may enable you to make suggestions of importance.

All officers and members of the State Troops, and all others, will please extend to you every courtesy.

Cody acted as "advisory scout" with Miles while the last Indian "war" fizzled to its close. Miles did not even call it a war; in his personal recollections he refers to it only as a "conspiracy and threatened uprising." But in his further capacity as war correspondent, Cody wired exciting dispatches to the New York newspapers: "Every hour brings a new opinion. Indian history furnishes no similar situation. You must imagine about 5000 Indians, an unusual proportion warriors, better armed than ever known before, hemmed in a cordon about sixteen miles in diameter, composed of over 3000 troops, acting like a slowly closing drag-net. This mass of Indians is now influenced by a percentage as despairingly desperate and fanatical as the late Big Foot party, under Short Bull and Kicking Bear. It contains also restrained neutrals, frightened and disaffected Ogallallas, hampered by the powerful Brulés, backed by renegades and desperadoes from all other Agencies. There are about twenty-five hundred acting and believed to be friendly Indians in and around the Agency.

"Such is the situation General Miles and the military confront. Anyone of this undisciplined mass is able to precipitate a terrible conflict from the most unexpected quarter. Each of the component quantities is to be watched, to be measured, to be just to. In fact it is a war with a most wily and savage people, yet the whites are restrained by a humane and peaceful desire to prevent bloodshed and save a people from themselves. . . .

"At the moment, as far as words go, I would say it

will be peace, but the smouldering spark is visible that may precipitate a terrible conflict any time in the next few days."

There was no conflict. Five days after the date of Cody's orders, General Miles, addressing him as Brigadier-General, present, handed him a letter in which he had written gravely: "I am glad to inform you that the entire body of Indians are now camped near here [within a mile and a half]. They show every disposition to comply with the orders of the authorities. Nothing but an accident can prevent peace being re-established, and it will be our ambition to make it of a permanent character. I feel that the State troops can now be withdrawn with safety." This letter was featured in the next show program.

On January sixteenth all the recalcitrant bands surrendered and their leaders were taken as hostages.

Burke and Cody wanted to take some of the late rebels away with them to Europe. In particular, they wanted the half-crazy Kicking Bear and Short Bull, the chief who bore an esthetic air. Since Sitting Bull was below the sod, Short Bull could be played up as the real instigator of the Ghost War. He did not care for the rôle.

In a plaintive first-person story, dictated between trances and still extant in manuscript, Short Bull tried to set himself right. He had been one of those chosen to journey into the far West to meet the Messiah. He insisted that the Messiah had said to him, "I want no more fighting. Whenever you do anything that is bad something will happen to you—I mean fights between the Indians and the whites." After his return with this message Short Bull had joined in the ghost dances and had been pestered by the police. His nephew, a Carlisle student, had been shot by white men. Twenty-three of

his relatives had been killed at Wounded Knee. "During all this time," he said, "my heart was bad, yet I did not want my people to fight the government. I might have done much harm but kept my people from it. I wanted no fighting. I wanted to do as the Messiah bid me."

Burke had considerable difficulty with the Interior Department because of the slanders about the maltreatment of the show Indians. Those who had come back were examined. They said they were well satisfied with their pay, clothing, food and general welfare. Furthermore, about fifty of them had proved the refining influence of travel by getting into the blue uniforms of the Indian police. General Miles thought it would be a good thing to send the hostages abroad with Buffalo Bill, and so it was finally ordered.

Cody sailed for England with his hundred Indians and with new honors, which Burke clinched by the ingeniously exaggerated statement that "GENERAL CODY holds his commission in the NATIONAL GUARD of the United States (State of Nebraska), an honorable position, and as high as he can possibly attain. *His connection with the Regular United States Army* has covered a continuous period of *fifteen years*, and desultory connection of 30 years, in the most troublous era of that superb corps' Western history, as Guide, Scout, and Chief of Scouts—a position unknown in any other service."

CHAPTER XXIII

ROUGH RIDERS

SIX years before Roosevelt stormed San Juan Hill with his motley regiment called the "Rough Riders" that term was used by the Wild West Show.*

While Cody and the Indians had been at the front in Dakota, Nate Salsbury had kept the show in winter quarters in Germany. He had not been idle. He was preparing to carry through his original plan, formed fourteen years before, for an exhibition of horsemanship, in which riders from many parts of the world would be contrasted with the American cowboys, Indians and vaqueros. In distant South Africa, South America, Arabia and Russia emissaries were set to work.

The perfect organization of the show excited admiration as it renewed its march on the continent. Annie Oakley wrote in her diary of the attentiveness with which German officers observed it:

"We never moved without at least forty officers of the Prussian guard standing all about with notebooks, taking down every detail of the performance. They made minute notes of how we pitched camp—the exact number of men needed, every man's position, how long it took, how we boarded the trains and packed the horses and broke camp; every rope and bundle and kit was inspected and mapped.

"But most of all they took interest in our kitchen. The

*Roosevelt had used the term still six years earlier. In a letter written to Henry Cabot Lodge on August 10, 1886, from Medora, Dakota, he said: "I think there is some good fighting stuff among these harum-scarum roughriders out here."

traveling ranges were inspected and enumerated in those endless notebooks. The chefs were interviewed. The methods of storing food, of preparing it, of having necessities ready for use at a minute's notice, all these things were jotted down. Naturally we were curious as to why they were doing all this, and had our own ideas about how it would be used in some way for the army—one could not travel in Germany even in those days without feeling sure that sooner or later the Kaiser would throw his nation into war. But we had no idea, of course, that the world was to listen, mouth open, twenty-five years later, to the stories of the marvelous traveling kitchens of the Teuton army, serving meals piping hot on the road to Brussels—an idea gained from the Buffalo Bill Wild West show when we toured Germany!"

How Annie might have prevented the World War became the subject of anecdote and cartoon. One day in Berlin William Hohenzollern saw her shoot the ashes from a cigarette held in a man's mouth. He asked her to try it on him. She did so, clipping the end of his cigar. "Annie missed the Kaiser by about four inches," her husband said. The sequel is that in 1917 she sat down and wrote the Kaiser a letter asking for another shot at him.

Queen Wilhelmina saw the show in Belgium and the company visited the battle-field of Waterloo, where the cowboy band played the *Star Spangled Banner*. Back in England, the performance for one day included the aging survivors of the Charge of the Light Brigade, who marched around the arena and gave an exhibition of lance and sword exercise.

A hundred Zulus were added to the company during the winter stand at Glasgow. Fears were publicly expressed by Burke that there would be a mighty clash when the South African natives and the American red Indians

met for the first time. But the occasion, celebrated by a dinner in the arena, proved to be a love feast.

When the Cossacks and the gauchos arrived, the time had come to adopt the sub-title, "Congress of Rough Riders of the World," which was first used when the show returned to London in the spring of 1892. Rough riding, trick riding and racing were featured above the familiar shooting acts.

Straight from the pampas of South America, the gauchos used huge home-made saddles which the American cowboys sneered at as "damned feather beds." Two gauchos at once would mount and ride the buckers, one holding the reins and plying the whip, the other hanging on as best he could. While they could use the lariat, for contrast they exhibited the bolas, iron balls on rawhide thongs which they swung round their heads and hurled from a distance of sixty feet with fierce accuracy.

Far more brilliant were the Cossacks, wiry, bearded, wearing knee-length coats belted at the waist, high round hats, and top boots with silver spurs. Each was armed with a great dagger, a thirty-two inch muzzle-loading pistol and the long Caucasian rifle, and carried his powder in rows of little tubes hung across the chest. Baggy saddles made their seat unusually high. They were led by Prince Ivan Rostomov Macheradse, who was billed as a direct descendant of Mazeppa. It was said of him that he might have traveled with a suite and demanded the social reception befitting his rank, but that he preferred to be a humble worker with the rest of the company.

The artist eye of Frederic Remington was delighted by the Cossacks. He wrote from London: "They soar and whirl about in graceful curves. . . . They march slowly round over imaginary steppes, singing in a most dolorous way. . . . They dance over swords in a light-

footed and crazy way, and do feats on their running horses. . . . They stand on their heads, vault on and off, chase each other in a game called chasing the handkerchief, and they reach down at top speed and mark the ground with a stick. Their long coat-tails flap out behind like an animated rag bag, while their legs and arms are visible by turns. Their grip on the horse is maintained by a clever use of the stirrups, which are twisted and crossed at will."

Native American riders were not neglected. An Indian mounted bareback rode in competition with an English huntsman in a pink coat. Cowboys snatched objects from the ground, lassoed steers and buffalo and rode the broncoes. Britishers read in the program the appreciative comment of a Texas editor: "Some ponies will buck for hours, only stopping to get breath for a fresh start. This kind is recommended for the use of dyspeptics and invalids suffering from torpidity of liver. A pitching mustang, when working on full time and strictly devoting his attention to business, is the most moving sight I ever beheld. His spine seems to be of whale-bone, and he appears to possess all the elements of a steam-boat explosion, a high-pressure pile-driver, an earthquake, in addition to the enthusiasm of a county convention."

Of all the Americans, the vaquero was perhaps the most colorful. The program said: "He is fond of gaudy clothes, and when you see him riding well mounted into a frontier town, the first thought of an eastern man is that a circus has broken loose in the neighborhood, and this is one of the performers. The familiar broad-brimmed sombrero covers his head; a rich jacket, embroidered by his sweetheart perhaps, envelops his shapely shoulders; a sash of blue or red silk is wrapped around

his waist, from which protrude a pair of revolvers; and buckskin trousers, slit from the knee to the foot and ornamented with rows of brass or silver buttons, complete his attire, save that enormous spurs, with jingling pendants, are fastened to the boots, and announce in no uncertain sound the presence of the *beau-ideal* vaquero in full dress.

"His saddle is of the pure Mexican 'type, with high pommel, whereon hangs the inevitable lariat, which in his hands is almost as certain as a rifle shot. Ordinarily he is a peaceful young fellow, but when the whisky is present in undue proportions, he is a good individual to avoid. Like the cow-boy, he is brave, nimble, careless of his own life, and reckless when occasion requires, of those of other people. At heart he is not bad."

It was the Cossacks who brought to Cody and Salsbury their highest honor from British royalty—a command performance at Windsor Castle. Her majesty wished to see the Cossacks ride. Since their act took only twelve minutes, Nate Salsbury determined to make a good job of it. He hired a train of cars, loaded the greater part of the outfit and took it down to Windsor.

For arena the lawn tennis grounds were enclosed by sheep-fold fences. A canvas and carpeted pavilion for the Queen and her guests was thrown up on the broad battlements. John Burke took out the hairpins and let down his long curly hair. When Burke let down his hair, it was always the promise of a big day.

This was a big day indeed. The show never went better. Nate Salsbury stood beside Victoria and explained each act, conversing easily with princes and princesses in three languages, and much impressed by the lack of "lugs." He was very proud, because, he said, "I had fulfilled my promise made to Cody, one night

on the train from Montreal to Toronto, that I would land him at the foot of the throne of England."

At lunch afterward in the rooms of the Queen's Equerry, jeweled mementoes were presented in the Queen's name. Since Cody was not drinking that summer, his partner did duty for both, in one glass of wine.

Cody's extraordinary abstinence on this occasion was noised about until it reached the ears of the Salvation Army. General Booth at once put his name on a banner as a great exponent of temperance. The English papers were filled with his virtues and his courage in refusing the royal liquor. He became the "frappé toast of the hour." The great news at last sifted back home, where a Denver paper set the record straight by saying, "If Bill ever got on one of those whooping prairie tears of his he would break up any foreign temperance community in about one hour."

The skies opened above Chicago on April 3, 1893. Sheets of spring rain made a morass of the arena in which the Wild West was to give its first show in America in four years.

Some craven soul went through the deluge to ask Cody whether the show would go on.

"Go on?" he barked. "Why, this is dusty weather for our men!"

He spurred his horse through the mire. Before the covered grand stand he swept off his white sombrero and as if defying the elements, shook the hair that hung, dragged, on his shoulders. That long hair was touched with gray, he was a little stout, he was forty-seven years old, but he was more majestic than ever. And in the greeting which he roared to the throng there was the new and stirring phrase—"Ladies and gentlemen, per-

mit me to introduce to you a Congress of Rough Riders of the World!"

No longer was his show simply an echo of the once wild West. True, Chief Standing Bear got off the train at Chicago wearing a bonnet of two hundred eagle feathers; though it cost him one hundred and twenty-five dollars, he could afford it, being a rich Indian out on the reservation, what with his hundred and fifty head of cattle. Kicking Bear was there and Rain-in-the-Face, lame from a wound received in the Custer massacre; it was hinted that it was he who had given the death blow to Custer himself. There were old Rocky Bear, Young-Man-Afraid-of-His-Horse, young Jack Red Cloud, son of the old chief, and John Burke No Neck, a child who had been found on the bloody field at Wounded Knee with his father dead beside him, and had been adopted by the soft-hearted Major Burke. On the lot stood the bullet-riddled cabin at the door of which Sitting Bull had been shot down, and beside it were his sweat-lodge and ghost-pole, relics of the fatal ghost dance.

But Indians and cowboys and Mexicans were not all now. In the grand parade were Cossacks, gauchos, Arabs, German Uhlans, French chasseurs, British lancers and American cavalrymen. Four hundred mounted men in the arena at once, six hundred in the entire company, or as the advertisements said, "More Ladies, Gentlemen and Beasts than ever seen in one exhibition."

The occasion of this mobilization at Chicago was the Columbian Exposition. The management of the World's Fair would not have the Wild West inside the gates. It was too undignified. Cheerfully Cody and Salsbury picked a fourteen-acre site opposite the main entrance, laid out their camp, arena and forest and a grand stand for eighteen thousand people and opened four weeks

ahead of the Fair. They printed a letter-head with a picture of Columbus—"Pilot of the Ocean, the first Pioneer"—balanced by a picture of Cody—"Pilot of the Prairie, the last Pioneer."

On the very day when the World's Fair began, the Wild West had to stop selling its own tickets, with thousands still clamoring at the gates. At first the Fair was closed on Sundays, in deference to public sentiment, but the Wild West ran full blast and thrived on the dollars which the Fair was losing. Throughout the season many a visitor paid his way into Buffalo Bill's enclosure under the impression that he was getting into the World's Fair, and stayed, well satisfied.

The horsemanship was superb. The Bedouin Arabs rode like fiends, their long draperies streaming out behind as they leaned over and touched the ground. Dismounting, they became acrobats, tumbling in the soft earth and climbing into a pyramid in which nine of them were supported on the head, shoulders and knees of one giant.

The Uhlans were from the Kaiser's crack Potsdamer Reds, glittering with helmets and breast-plates, brandishing lances fourteen feet long and tipped with the German colors. They vied with twelve French chasseurs in brass helmets, sky-blue coats and scarlet trousers. The British hussars and dragoons, being drawn from three regiments, wore three different uniforms. The detachment of United States cavalymen was drab in comparison, but it won the loudest cheers as it swept past. "They can beat us on uniforms," said Sergeant Southmayde, cocking his forage cap over his eye, "but I'll bet American dollars against Russian rubles, stack for stack, that we can lick them to a standstill."

For all the rivalry in the arena, however, it was an

amicable company. "Cody has made the warriors of all nations join hands," exclaimed Opie Read.

Who were the best riders? As one group after another raced about the arena, the audience was urged to take sides and declare its choice. It did so with shouts and cheers. Johnny Baker says that there was no question that the gauchos were the finest of all the riders. Remington preferred the Cossacks. The cowboys were always the favorites of Sir Henry Irving, who said, "Such dare-devil riding was never seen on earth in one spot, as that displayed by these rough riders. All the picturesque horsemanship of the famous Bedouins sinks to child's play before these reckless Mamelukes of the plains. When the American cowboys sweep like a tornado up the track, forty or fifty strong, every man swinging his hat and every pony at its utmost speed, a roar of wonder and delight breaks from the thousands and the men reach the grand stand in a cloud welcomed by the thunder-burst."

To Amy Leslie the American troopers appeared to possess the most daring and the most grace. After being the guest of an attractive and insinuating lieutenant, she wrote an excellent comparison of the various seats: "An Indian hugs the animal close, lifting the horse instead of bearing weight upon it. Every muscle of an Indian's body trembles in response to the horse's gait. He sticks to the saddle or bareback by a sort of capillary attraction. The cowboy and Mexican do not touch a horse, but wear him out. The rider seems winged and has his hands full or ropes and reins and everything but the expected. Germans are huge, bulky riders, who bounce and shake and take good care of their horses. Cossacks ride a horse like it was stationary and cast-iron, and the Arabs whirl about, a mass of circling drapery and arms. A French-

man is always *le beau sabreur*, but he can't ride even a rocking horse. The most beautiful, graceful and easiest riders in the world are American cavalrymen."

From the same observant visitor we get the best picture of Cody himself during that magnificent season: "Cody is one of the most imposing men in appearance that America ever grew in her kindly atmosphere. In his earlier days a hint of the border desperado lurked in his blazing eyes and the poetic fierceness of his mien and coloring. Now it is all subdued into pleasantness and he is the kindest, most benign gentleman, as simple as a village priest and learned as a savant of Chartreuse. All the gray that has been thrust into his whirlwind life has centered itself in the edges of his beautiful hair."

When the Nebraska Building was opened Cody rode in the parade as one of the governor's staff, crusted with gold lace, and, as a reporter observed, "with the genius which he usually displays in such matters, usurped a large share of the governor's glory and accepted the plaudits of the crowd with engaging candor." Shortly thereafter he was being mentioned for governor of Nebraska.

Some of the boys down in Nebraska who wanted to see the Fair conceived the idea of doing some rough riding of their own. They decided to put on a cowboy race, beginning at the cattle town of Chadron and ending at the gates of the Wild West in Chicago. Each cowboy would start with two horses and ride them alternately over the seven-hundred-mile route. When Cody and Burke encouraged the idea, they found themselves attacked by the Humane Society and the S. P. C. A. Good people in the East thought such a race harsh treatment for horse-flesh. Cody replied, fondly pointing out to the reporters one of his own broncoes, "Why, this little rat of a horse can stand more pounding rides up hill and down

dale than most people imagine. What would kill a thoroughbred just puts a keen edge on a pony's appetite." But he used his influence to make the race humane by putting up an extra prize of five hundred dollars for the man who would bring his horses through in the best condition.

Several of the riders showed their own tenderness for their mounts in curious ways. After nightfall, on lonely stretches, they rode in hacks, with their horses hitched behind. One was so anxious to be humane that he shipped both horses and himself over part of the distance by railroad. These incidents somewhat discounted the publicity value of the race, in spite of much hard work by Burke. Cody cut a fine figure nevertheless when, early one June morning, a tired, road-stained little man named John Berry galloped up to the Wild West gates, the first in. He was greeted by Buffalo Bill himself, who passed practised hands over the pony and announced that it had come to no harm. Other riders straggled in and started a squabble about the prize money, because Berry was not a real cowboy and knowing the route from Chadron to Chicago better than the others, had been able to take short-cuts. After the prizes had been divided eight ways, the riders and their horses were exhibited in the Wild West.

Altogether it was the most successful year in outdoor show history. Competition quailed before the Wild West. Buck Taylor had launched his own show, but Salsbury after seeing it said it was "the most wild and fearful thing ever looked upon and can't possibly hurt us." Carver was on the road again; Cody wanted to break him up, but they decided it wasn't worth wasting money to do something that would happen anyway in the natural course. Barnum was dead. Pawnee Bill was

making a good fight of it. The Forepaugh Circus came to Chicago announcing that it would make war to the knife with the Wild West for billboard space, and that it had a well-disciplined gang of a hundred and sixty bill stickers who would defend their paper with their lives. Unruffled, Cody and Salsbury added new features to their program and kept their stands crowded.

Always new features; no matter how great the revenue and the public acclaim, the show was never good enough for Salsbury. He did not yet have all the rough riders of the world. He announced, "It is my intention to keep on enlarging Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show until we include in our performance a glimpse of every variety of wild life." And he was off to Brooklyn to get a location for next season. During the World's Fair, it was reported, the show had been seen by six million people and had cleaned up a cool million dollars.

Faintly there began to be heard hints of a strange new kind of competition. Thomas A. Edison had perfected the motion-picture machine and had just built a producing studio. Two of the first actors to appear before his camera were Buffalo Bill and Annie Oakley. The pictures were shown in nickel-in-the-slot machines. Experiments were being made with projection on a screen for large audiences. But Edison discouraged this idea, saying: "If we make this screen thing that you are asking for it will spoil everything. We are making these peepshow machines and selling a lot of them at a good profit. If we put out a screen machine there will be a use for maybe about ten of them in the whole United States. With that many screen machines you could show the pictures to everybody in the country—and then it would be done. Let's not kill the goose that lays the golden eggs."

CHAPTER XXIV

ELDORADO

GENEROUS, easy-going Bill Cody, who never could take care of a dollar, now had hundreds of thousands coming in and millions in prospect. His earliest investments reveal the finest side of his character and forecast his downfall. He set an old friend up in business. He bought another business for his sister and her husband. He became angel for a pretty actress. And he began to establish in the mountains a colony that should be "a monument of my work for the West."

The old friend was Frank Powell, who had become mayor of LaCrosse, Wisconsin. He had the formula for a cereal substitute for coffee, as good as coffee and much cheaper. Calling the reporters in to taste the brew, Cody told them that as president of the Cody-Powell Company, he considered himself a benefactor of the poor.

His sister Helen had lately married a newspaper man in Duluth. With the open hand that never failed his family, Cody bought a printing-plant, put up a brick building and installed his brother-in-law as editor of the *Duluth Press*.

The actress broke into the news when Cody knocked Fred May flat in Chamberlain's restaurant at Washington. It was explained that the dispute was over a bottle of wine, but gossip had it that the two men were fighting about a girl whom both had known in London—Katherine Clemmons.

The victor promptly retired to his home at North

Platte. Nate Salsbury looked him up there, and reported: "I found Cody perfectly sober and very penitent. He said, 'I have quit my nonsense for good. The past winter has taught me a lesson that I should have learned long ago.'"

Before long the lesson became public property. The irate Katherine Clemmons began to talk in print. It appeared that Cody had sunk more than fifty thousand dollars in her stage career. She had met him in London, where he had first put up money to star her through the provinces. Now, in America, he had hired a theater for her. "I would rather manage a million Indians than one soubrette," he said later.

After the première of her second drama, she had telegraphed him gaily: "Play roasted. Company roasted. I more than roasted. What will you take for your interest?" But, she complained, there was no reply; her angel "got a bear-hunting fit," and went away to the mountains.

He came back from the mountains part owner of an inn at Sheridan, and of a stage-coach line, and inspired with a great project. Years before, he had fallen in love with the vast beautiful bowl that curved from the Big Horn range to the Yellowstone. His sister quoted his eloquent description:

"To my right stretched a towering range of snow-capped mountains, broken here and there into minarets, obelisks, and spires. Between me and this range of lofty peaks a long irregular line of stately cottonwoods told me a stream wound its way beneath. The rainbow-tinted carpet under me was formed of innumerable brilliant-hued wild flowers; it spread about me in every direction, and sloped gracefully to the stream. Game of every kind played on the turf, and bright-hued birds flitted

over it. It was a scene no mortal can satisfactorily describe. At such a moment a man, no matter what his creed, sees the hand of the mighty Maker of the universe majestically displayed in the beauty of nature; he becomes sensibly conscious, too, of his own littleness. I uttered no word for very awe; I looked upon one of nature's masterpieces."

During the World's Fair he had read the prophecy of Julian Ralph: "Here will come thousands upon thousands of men and women; here will soon be seen vast areas of the land fenced in, set with tiny farms and out-buildings, gay with green and yellow grain, dotted with orchards, lively with teams upon a tangle of wagon roads. Railroads will thread the scene—and somewhere—ah! that would be prophesying to say just where—in this same basin there is certain to rise a city of wealth, size and importance; with factories and wholesale and retail shops, high schools, stone churches, parks and mansions."

After his prospecting trip, Cody determined to make that dream his own, to build that city, and to live among those mountains. Back in North Platte where he had built a fine new house he was now the bountiful prince. He had paid off the debts of all the five churches and had given each pastor a year's living. He had bought the uniforms for the silver-horned band, and had donated the cemetery and the fair-grounds, while his name was borne proudly by the local militia and the hook and ladder company. But the town was growing up around the edges of his property. He called his ranch "Scouts' Rest" but it was no longer restful. He wanted open country again. And he was getting heartily sick of the show business.

At Ambrose Park, Brooklyn, the season was not very good. Dispatches to out-of-town papers, which were not

under the immediate spell of the press agent, began to say, "Buffalo Bill is growing old." Bill Matthewson of Wichita was getting some credence for his claim that he, and not Cody, was the original and genuine Buffalo Bill. Some of the papers printed articles belittling Cody's election to the Nebraska legislature, twenty-two years before. Worse yet, Nate Salsbury was stricken at the close of the season with the illness which made him a partial invalid for the rest of his life. Cody quarreled with his wife again when she objected to the entertainment he provided at his ranch for a theatrical troupe which came to North Platte.

And worst of all, the time had come to take the road and play one-day stands. That sort of traveling was new to Cody. For each of the past two seasons he had settled down in one city. In Europe he had toured, but usually in long jumps, playing for days or weeks at each stand. The schedule for the 1895 season called for one hundred and thirty-one stands in one hundred and ninety days, spread over a route of nearly nine thousand miles.

Sleeping on trains, rolling out with the gray dawn, hustling to the lot, rain or shine, in a jumble of canvas, animals, wagons, equipment and weary men, parading through strange streets, giving two performances, and striking out in the dark dead-tired, to play another stand the next day—it was circus business. It was planned by a circus man—James A. Bailey.

When Salsbury saw that he himself was too ill to carry the full load, he promptly and wisely made a contract with Bailey, under which the latter was to provide transportation, plant and local expenses in return for a speculative share in profits.

Bailey was "the little Napoleon of the show business." A year younger than Cody and Salsbury, he started life

as a bell-boy in a hotel in Michigan and ran off with a circus when it passed through his town. He rose to be a partner with Cooper and in 1880 forced a partnership upon Barnum. His capacity for work was stupendous; he confessed that he cared for nothing but success in his chosen business, and never went to the theater or sought any other amusement. When he took up his morning newspaper, he turned first to the reports of prices on wheat, butter, eggs, potatoes and other farm products, because that was his barometer of conditions along the circus routes.

With this relentless manager dating him for one-day stands, with Salsbury ill and with his own forty-nine years weighing upon him, Cody might have retired then and there, had it not been that his investments were already over-taxing him.

The severity of the strain appears in a letter written to his partner in January, 1895:

Dear Nate.

It's wrong to trouble you. But I am in a tight place. And if I had a little time to go on I am sure that I could pull through and make a loan on my property. . . . will you go on my note with Stokes for \$5000. Nate this is to keep my credit good that I ask this. And if I fail to make money next summer I will sell everything I have and pay you and others I owe. And start in fresh. This being pushed to the wall, I will not stand. Nothing hurts me more than to be in debt—please answer by messenger and give me your advice. And tell me how to pull out of this hole.

BILL

One plan that they had for pulling him out of the

hole was to launch another ambitious enterprise. Salsbury left his sick-bed to try out the idea of an exposition of negro life and character, entitled *Black America*. The company had a roster of three hundred negroes, traveling in a special train of fifteen cars. Within the first three weeks Salsbury saw that it was hopeless, but Cody urged that it be kept going. It was closed for ever in the autumn, with heavy loss.

The 1895 tour, hard though it was, brought financial relief. Sitting grandly in his private car the next spring Cody said: "We calculate on making \$500,000 every season. There has never been a week since I began the business, twenty-five years ago, that I have not made money. We have fifty-two cars, ten more than Barnum and fourteen more than Ringling." He declared that he would not take a million dollars for his possessions.

Profits melted away faster than he made them. He formed the Shoshone Land and Irrigation Company, which held four hundred thousand acres of land in the Big Horn Basin, sixty miles from the nearest railway station and one day's stage ride from Yellowstone Park. He started a large ranch there and named it the TE. He was founding the town of Cody, beginning with a log-cabin hotel. Because irrigation was necessary, he was digging the Cody Canal. Irrigation, he said, "makes farming a pleasure and crops a sure thing." In the mountains, he knew, were coal and precious metals. It was "the new Eldorado of the West." Salsbury, who was sharing the burden, went out and looked the property over and wrote, "Our company has erected two houses, one a store and office, the other a boarding house. We are the aristocrats of the basin. Five saloons are in full blast."

To the reporters Cody said, "I am connected with

eleven different enterprises and president of five companies. I have lost several fortunes in outside ventures." A new poster displayed Cody in comparison with Napoleon—the one "the man on horse of 1795," the other "the man on horse of 1895," while between sat Rosa Bonheur painting her portrait of Cody—"Art perpetuating Fame."

At this moment Buffalo Bill was perhaps better known to more people, young and old, than any man in America. He played one hundred thirty-two towns and traveled more than ten thousand miles in 1896. He was even "mentioned" for president, at least by John Burke. Suddenly he predicted his retirement. "I will make my farewell tour in 1900 and close at the World's Exposition in Paris."

"What will you do then?" people asked.

"Go to the soldiers' home, I reckon. I used to be a soldier and I guess they'll take care of me."

But the wise ones glanced at the maps under his elbow and knew that he was dreaming of a lazy old age in his mountain paradise.

As became a man of large affairs, he switched his politics to the side of conservatism, declaring for protection and the gold plank. "I was a Democrat until I found out my mistake," he said. "There is nothing to the Democrats. The Republicans have all the wealth. The Democrats have nothing." The lately nominated Bryan was a great man, but "his speeches are like the Platte River, two thousand miles long and six inches deep." Cody chuckled at the conundrum which went round: "What is the difference between Buffalo Bill and Bryan? Answer: Buffalo Bill has a show."

A Chicago critic looked at the show with a squint, and wrote: "Cody's nonsensical posings grow more enticing

every year. A trifle more obese, he bowed, pranced and cavorted . . . a charming bundle of airs and nonsense. Meanwhile a little man who couldn't break a glass ball with an ax, will maintain his watchful patrol around ticket offices and main entrances, and nobody will know that the big amusement doings inside are of his creating and planning more than anyone else. His name is Nate Salsbury. . . ."

Certainly Cody's partner and Bailey and the press agents were doing magnificent deeds. The 1897 show was "An Ethnological, Anthropological and Etymological Congress—Greatest since Adam."

A battery of light artillery was added to the program; the rumbling and firing pleased a public that was beginning to get the war fever in its passionate sympathy for oppressed Cuba. Skilful drivers steered four galloping horses with gun and caisson between stakes which left a margin of only a few inches on either side, while the bugle blared.

John Burke outdid all his previous eloquence in his speech to a reporter: "Damn it! What we are doing is educating you people. I'm not afraid to say, sir, that the Wild West symposium of equestrian ability has done more for this country than the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution of the United States or the Life of General Washington. Its mission is to teach manhood and horse sense. We are not traveling to make money, sir, but only to do good!"

They made one hundred and four stands that year. While the summer dragged on Cody's true thoughts kept breaking through: "As a fellow gets old he doesn't feel like tearing about the country forever. I do not want to die a showman. I grow very tired of this sort of sham hero-worship sometimes."

CHAPTER XXV

ACROSS THE DIVIDE

"CUBA Libre" and "Remember the Maine!" With the twin slogans the East was whipped into a frenzy of anger in the spring of 1898. The cry was for war.

To the general eye, Buffalo Bill embodied all that was warlike. Instead of the stale and sham hero-worship that had lately palled upon him, he now felt the genuine glow of patriotism and the confidence of a vast public in him as the greatest fighting man of his time. He responded with a screaming head-line in the newspapers, "I could drive the Spaniards from Cuba with thirty thousand Indians!"

New photographs were taken and printed, showing him in eight different poses, five of them in his colonel's uniform with a handsome dress sword. As his contribution to hatred, he told how he had once been mobbed in Madrid because he had slurred the Spanish national sport: he had said that the men in his show could rope and ride any bull in Spain. He polished up his Congressional medal and wore it. He became sensitive about his long hair, relic as it was of an outmoded form of combat. To a caller he said, "Just wait until I put up my hair and I'll go out with you. I do hate long hair, but people have come to identify me with long hair, so I won't cut it." As he wound a top-knot, pierced it with one silver hairpin and tucked it under his broad-brimmed hat, he grinned. "Long hair is business and not art with me."*

*Roosevelt tells of Pollock, a Pawnee Indian in his regiment, who had the camp barber in Cuba cut his hair, saying, "I don't want to wear my hair long like a wild Indian when I'm in civilized warfare."

A week before war was declared five thousand orphans, invited for their annual free visit to the Wild West Show, made Madison Square Garden ring with their shrieks as the flags of Cuba and the United States were carried around the arena, side by side. Buffalo Bill wiped away sincere tears and said with quivering lips, "So long as the children of the nation give vent to such patriotic outbursts as this, the United States can lick the rest of the world with one hand tied behind its back."

Greater stress was laid on the martial features of the show, the cavalry, the artillerymen with their two little gleaming cannon, the new contingent of Zouaves in their incredibly baggy pants. John Burke had gone to Cuba and had brought back a color guard of wounded insurgents. The audiences greeted them with roars of sympathy and fraternity.

The cheers for Buffalo Bill were even more deafening. He had volunteered at once. He was going to the front. He was strong for the volunteers, blurting out, "God Almighty makes the soldier, not West Point."

Teddy Roosevelt was mustering a regiment from the ranches of the West—rough riders, sure-shots and hard fighters all. Buffalo Bill might have been expected to join them, but it was natural enough that he did not, for he had the rank of colonel in the Nebraska militia. For a few days in 1891 he had been a general and "advisory scout" to General Miles, who was now going to Cuba and wanted him again. "My work will be my old rôle as scout." He shipped to Miles the two horses which he expected to ride in Cuba.

On the day war was declared, April twenty-fifth, Burke told the press that Cody would report for duty at the end of the week. "Buffalo Bill will come back

again," he said, "but he will leave a record behind him that neither Cuba nor America will be apt to forget, while Spain will remember him with a groan."

By the next week the show had moved to Philadelphia. There Cody was hailed as "never a greater hero than he is today." Asked how long it would take to lick the Spaniards, Burke, lately returned from Cuba, replied, "About two months to catch them all, and when caught, five minutes to lick them."

On May tenth at Washington, Cody said, "I am ready to leave at any time." But the expeditionary forces still lay sweltering in the home camps while the navy bottled up the Spanish squadron and maneuvered for control of the sea.

On May twenty-sixth at Hartford, the word was that Cody "felt in duty bound to remain with the Wild West as long as General Miles does not need his presence in camp; but his heart is with the troops." The transports sailed in June. On the sixteenth Cody was "holding himself in readiness."

El Caney fell, and Roosevelt's Rough Riders carried San Juan Hill. On the glorious fourth news came that the Spanish fleet had been annihilated off Santiago. Cody was "on waiting orders."

Miles went to Cuba with reenforcements. Learning of this, Cody, playing at Detroit, said, "Miles himself didn't know where he was going until a day or two before he was sent to Santiago. So he was not in the least to blame for my failure in getting to the front. But when our troops get before Havana, I'll be there with the boys."

Mrs. Cody, asked how she liked the idea of her husband going to war again, replied that she had learned to keep quiet about such matters.

THE MAKING OF BUFFALO BILL

Santiago fell. Troops landed and advanced in Porto Rico and the Philippines. Everywhere he went, Cody was being received as the mighty champion who was just about to go into action, while in each city the crowd congratulated themselves that he had been delayed long enough for them to have a last look at him before he went.

Cody himself began to realize that the war had moved too fast, that it was being won without him. At Eau Claire on August fourth he said that he had been appointed by McKinley to the position of chief of scouts with the rank of colonel and if the present negotiations should not result in a cessation of hostilities he would go with General Miles to Havana.

On August eighth the truth came out. Several weeks ago Miles had telegraphed to Cody from Ponce:

"Would like you to report here, taking first steamer from Newport News."

To this Cody had replied that since it looked as if peace terms might be made at once and it would cost him one hundred thousand dollars to close his show, hadn't he better wait? Miles' response had been a cable of one word: "Yes."

Buffalo Bill's public gasped. He had been called to the front and he had not gone!

"You don't know how I feel about this," he said at Minneapolis. "My father was the first man to lose his life in the cause of the freedom of the negro race. I would give \$10,000 to be with General Miles right now. I will wait here until I see how these negotiations turn out, and if peace is not here at once, I will report to General Miles."

Two days later he was on the road again. In another three days the armistice had been signed. "I have been in every war since I was old enough, but this one," said Cody, "and I did all I could to get into this."

As late as September twenty-second, at Kansas City, he was saying, "You see, if I should go down there now people would say I was a grand stand player. If there is more fighting there, you will find me at the front."

There was, of course, no more fighting. His two horses were returned with a note which read:

My dear Cody,

Your horses are now in Washington all right. You did not come to Porto Rico, therefore I rode them myself, and they are the only horses brought back to America.

NELSON A. MILES.

Let no one assume that Cody, even at fifty-two, lacked the courage to go and dare the Spaniard's bullets, the tropic heat and the yellow fever. It took far greater courage to stay at home and keep the show going, which is what his managers insisted upon his doing. He had to swallow the boasts that he and Burke had made in the first flush of the war madness, to hold the martial pose in the face of cheering mobs and know that he was betraying their trust, to forego the chance to win greater honors, and to miss the fun that he always found in campaigning with real soldiers. He did it to keep faith with his show. Consider the scope of the Wild West at that time—four hundred sixty-seven people, four hundred fifty-three horses and mules, two field pieces and caissons, two prairie-schooners, the stage-coach, four buggies, thirty-five baggage-wagons, two water-tanks,

two engines for electric lighting, sixteen flat cars, fifteen stock cars and eight sleeping-coaches. If its star had left, the show would not necessarily have closed (although the managers resorted to threats to close it), but its receipts would have been greatly reduced and many of its people thrown out of work. It is little wonder that the pressure on Cody to stick to his private duty was stronger than the urge to go to war.

While his personal prestige may have been battered in some places, the show flourished on bellicose publicity. And three weeks after hostilities ceased, his pride was restored by an ovation which lifted him to the very climax of his fame.

The Trans-Mississippi Exposition was being held at Omaha. It celebrated the winning of the West and marked the final passing of the pioneer. Cody was Nebraska's most famous son. His Wild West Show was coming back to play on the very grounds that had given it birth, fifteen years before. Appropriately, one day at the Exposition was set apart as Cody Day. It was August 31, 1898.

Twenty-four thousand people surged to their feet when Buffalo Bill rode in on a magnificent chestnut horse, Duke, leading his brilliant cavalcade. He dismounted and took his place in the grand stand among the high officials and a cluster of veteran frontiersmen.

The emotion of the recent war faded as those glamorous days lived again. There was no mention of Cuba or Spain when the governor paid eloquent tribute to Buffalo Bill. An old man came forward and said, "Give me your hand, Colonel." It was Alexander Majors, survivor of that firm which had sent out the overland wagon-trains and the pony express. Turning to the hushed crowd, Majors told how he had hired Cody forty-three years

before. "I remember when we paid him twenty-five dollars for the first month's work. He was paid in half-dollars, and he got fifty of them. He tied them up in his little handkerchief, and when he got home he untied the handkerchief and spread the money all over the table."

"I have been spreading it ever since," interjected Cody.*

"Bless your precious life, Colonel," said Majors as he sat down.

Then Senator Thurston: "You have been a great national and international educator of men. You have furnished a demonstration of the possibilities of our country that has advanced us in the opinion of all the world. But we who have been with you a third, or more than a third of a century, we remember you more dearly and tenderly than others do. We remember that when this whole western land was a wilderness, when these representatives of the aborigines were attempting to hold their own against the onward tide of civilization, the settler and the hardy pioneer, the women and the children, felt safe whenever Cody rode along the frontier; he was their protector and defender."

When the Colonel rose to respond, he was profoundly moved. His reply was in John Burke's best style: "How little I dreamed in the long ago that the lonely path of the scout and the pony express rider would lead me to the place you have assigned me today. Here, near the banks of the mighty Missouri, which flows unvexed to the sea, my thoughts revert to the early days of my manhood. I looked eastward across this rushing tide to the

*Only a few of those who heard knew that one of the hundred places in which Cody spread his money was a regular allowance to Uncle Alec himself, the man who had given him his first job.

Atlantic and dreamed that in that long-settled region all men were rich and all women happy. My friends, that day has come and gone. . . . Time goes on and brings with it new duties and responsibilities, but we old men, we who are called old-timers, cannot forget the trials and tribulations which we had to encounter while paving the path for civilization and national prosperity.

"The whistle of the locomotive has drowned the howl of the coyote; the barb-wire fence has narrowed the range of the cow-puncher; but no material evidence of prosperity can obliterate our contribution to Nebraska's imperial progress."

There was Buffalo Bill on the crest. He stood straight and proud in his fringed buckskins, eyes flashing, gray locks tossing in the warm Nebraska breeze, while his Wild West men yelled, the throng acclaimed him and the bands played the national anthem.

While the bands played, Buffalo Bill was crossing the divide. From that day on he was taking the down trail into the valley and the creeping shadows. A month later he fainted three times during a performance. Various explanations were offered: it was a cold; it was typhoid; it was a nervous breakdown; he was broken-hearted because Katherine Clemmons was in love with Howard Gould, and one paper darkly said: "Col. Cody doesn't drink anything stronger than ginger ale sometimes."

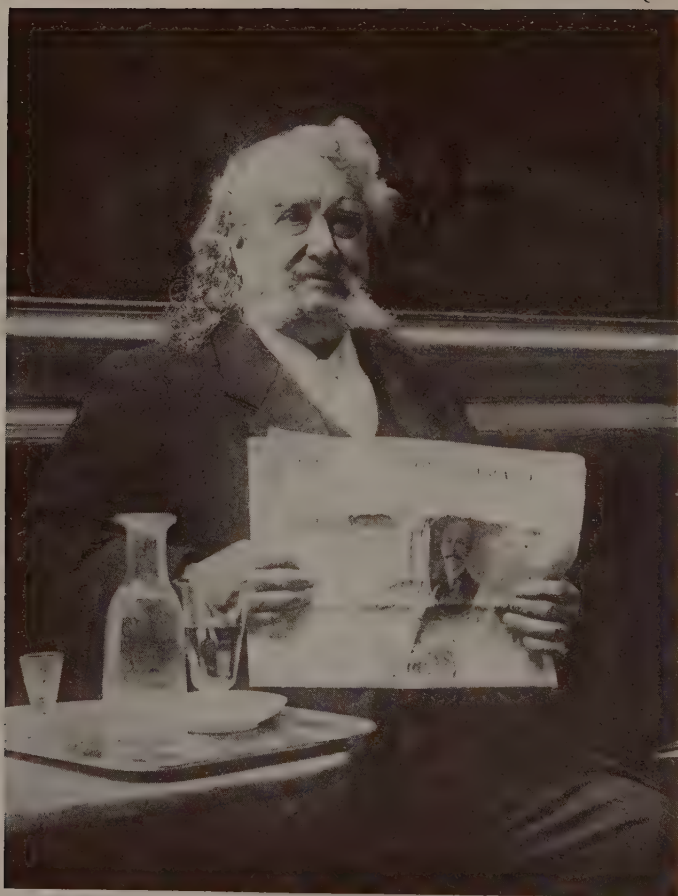
He was back in a few days to complete a season longer than he had had for years. He played many small places in Kansas and Nebraska and Colorado for the first time because he wanted the home folks to see his show before he quit. "The old timers almost talked a lung out of me," he said.

The show became still more warlike in 1899, with so



Photo by John C. Hemment, New York

Nate Salsbury and Cody on the grounds of the Wild West Show



From a photograph taken in Rome in 1906

Major John Burke, the greatest press agent of his time, who
worshiped Cody for forty-four years

many foreign people in it that John Burke said, "God Almighty is our property man, barring the rifles and saddles." Three Filipinos, seven Hawaiians and eight Cubans were added, and best of all, sixteen of Roosevelt's own Rough Riders. One of these was Tom Isbell, credited with firing the first shot that killed a Spaniard. Another was William McGinty, a bronco buster from Oklahoma, of whom Roosevelt said that he never walked a hundred yards if by any possibility he could ride. In June McGinty had the bad luck to fall from his horse and get his leg crushed. One of the regiment refused to join the show, remarking, "I ain't a buffalo or a rhinoceros or a giraffe, and I don't like to be stared at, and you knew we didn't do no fighting down there." But the sixteen made a grand showing and with the rest of the cowboys threw themselves gaily into the reproduction of the battle of San Juan Hill, which Nate Salsbury, in spite of his illness, had managed to devise.

The name "Rough Riders" came into its own. The bills now read:

The World's Rough Riders
A Kindergarten of History
Two Decades of Existence
Teaching Equestrianism, Primitive Savage,
Civil and Military
Conjoined with an Annex of
Colonial Equitation

Under the influence of the circus men who were directing the tours, there were now side-shows on the lot. Snake charmer, sword swallower, midgets and boy giant, glass blowers, mind readers, jig dancers, Japanese magicians, jugglers and fire eaters made incongruous com-

panions for Bill Cody and his Indians, cowboys and soldiers. The Wild West was losing its original flavor.

But Cody boasted, "I have not enjoyed such prosperity since 1895." He was still saying that if Miles had gone to Havana instead of Porto Rico, he would have been in the war. If Miles should now be sent to the Philippines, he would like to go. He was interviewed upon the tactics to be used against the Filipinos. His own part in the performance was somewhat curtailed, but in retort to criticism he burst out, "I'll wager with any man I can shoot just as accurately as ever."

Beneath the bravado he was much troubled. His investments were going badly. On the irrigation canal in the Big Horn Basin his money was being shamefully wasted. He owed Nate Salsbury one hundred thousand dollars and complained that "to be in debt worries me more than anything else."

Desperate for money, in September he wrote to his partner, making financial demands which nearly resulted in breaking the partnership. There was an angry exchange of letters and telegrams before they met in New York, patched it up and carried on.

Cody started a little newspaper in Wyoming. He planned another enterprise, the Cody Military College and International Academy of Rough Riders, with tuition two hundred fifty dollars. During 1900 he estimated that in addition to the show he was employing over four thousand men. He talked prosperity and came out for the Republican party and McKinley again. He was "mentioned" for vice-president.

"While I can't get down to playing marbles or mumble-peg any more I still manage to get around rather nicely," he said, and then, with a return of the old note: "I do not wish to be only known as a scout and showman,

but as a pioneer and developer of civilization. Every dollar I get from my show I immediately put into irrigation canals."

He put a number of dollars into a party at Chicago, which he explained meekly:

My dear Nate:

While in Chicago I had the severest week of my life with the G A R—Thursday evening of said week I went to a reunion meeting with such men as Gen. Miles, Wheeler, Senator Sharpe—Gen. Shaw—and about two hundred others. —well we had to fight the war over again and I with all the rest got to gay and it took me several days to get entirely well but I done my work—as the receipts will show—no one regrets it more than I do. . . .

Yours,
CODY.

Such sprees were not really of common occurrence. They were violations of the rule he set for himself, which was to stay sober throughout the show season. Barring accident, he usually had the strength of mind to wait until he had played the last stand, but as it drew near he would count the days.

"Let's see," he would say, "we close at Memphis Saturday. Monday I'll be in Omaha, Tuesday I'll be in North Platte, the next day I start for the ranch. A week from today I'll be drunk."

He would pick up cronies all the way from Omaha to the Big Horn Basin. They used to say that it took him two days to drive in from the railroad to the town of Cody, because he had to stop at every ranch house. At Cody he would find the four saloons jammed with re-

ception committees that had ridden from miles around to do him honor. A day or a week later he would finally reach his own TE ranch, with as many as the house would hold to be his guests for as long as they would stay, to drink with him, hunt with him and stretch in front of the wide fireplace and listen to his merry yarns.

Neighbors said that the TE was the most overmanned and the most underworked ranch in the whole basin, but little did he care. It was his place for play. "Down in Nebraska," he said; "there's nothing now but farms and damned barb-wire fences." He had long since sold the old ranch on the Dismal River. The plainsman had become the mountain dweller.

On his broad acres between the hills deer and antelope fraternized with his sleek Herefords. Elk and big horns could be shot within sight of his chimneys, and grizzlies and black bear not much farther away.

Eight thousand feet above the cities on the seacoast he found peace and grateful quiet. One night he roused every guest in the ranch house exclaiming, "Come outdoors!" They gathered, shivering in their night-clothes, peering into the mysterious dark, wondering what danger loomed. When they were all outside, he said, "Hush! Listen. I just wanted you all to hear that music. The wind in the pines. Ain't it wonderful?"

"'Tis to these things," his publicity said truly, "Cody speeds across land and sea, as soon as the show season ends. Asphalt, stone, brick and marble have no charms for him. He goes to the country he loves, and to the friends who love him. Prouder by far to be grasped by their hard hands and to be called 'Billy' or 'Bill' by them than when as the world's greatest 'man on horseback,' he prances to the front of the world's greatest exhibition of the horse and horsemanship, where, amid the

huzzas and hand-clapping of thousands of admirers he is grandiloquently introduced as Col. William F. Cody, better known as Buffalo Bill."

His wife stayed on at their fine house in North Platte, by her own choice as well as his. When the spirit moved him he went home. It always did so at Christmas. The day after the Christmas festivities in 1900 he collapsed and found himself unable to speak.

Although a judge, having heard witnesses, later ruled that he had simply been overcome by overindulgence at the table, Cody was convinced that his wife had tried to poison him. She admitted that she had put a drug in his coffee, but protested that it was merely intended to cure him of his taste for alcohol. She had always hated liquor; their first quarrel after their marriage had been because he sold liquor in his tavern. She denied the report that the drug she gave him was dragon's blood, bought from a gypsy who said that by feeding it to her husband she could make him love her again.

Louisa was jealous of all his fine friends, of the carousals at the ranch in Wyoming, of the adulation he received wherever he went, of the long journeys overseas on which he never took her. She denied that she had said to some one, "I wouldn't go anywhere with the old reprobate." When she asked to go to England with him he had said that it would cost too much, yet he had been able, she said, to take another woman with him and it had cost him fifty thousand dollars to get out of the entanglement.

Most of all she was jealous of these women who flocked about him. Years before, in the theatrical days, she had left him for a time because she didn't like the way he said good-by to the girls of his company at the close of the season. At a society dinner in New York

the débutantes had taken turns sitting beside him. Now there was a certain young woman traveling with the Wild West for no apparent good reason. She was, Cody said, a "lady press agent, and a mighty good one, too." Louisa thought differently and said so.

Cody went away still believing that his wife had meant to kill him. The ardent love letters that he had always sent to her ceased. When he came on for the opening in 1901, his hair and beard were almost white.

Once more the show gave evidence of Salsbury's struggle, at home and at heavy odds, to keep it authentic. It included a detachment of Boers and some of the Canadians who had fought them in South Africa, men from the Life Saving Service with beach cart, breeches buoy and mast, and a reproduction of the storming of Tientsin in the recent Boxer Rebellion. The Indians reluctantly made up as Chinamen for this act.*

At Chicago in mid-summer Cody's hand was noticeably less steady; an old devotee was heard to say regretfully, "He didn't use to miss those balls that way when he was here during the World's Fair."

In the fall the show train was in a head-on collision with a freight at Washington; many animals were killed. None of the people seemed hurt but soon afterward Annie Oakley's hair began to turn white and she began to show other signs of an injury which put an end to her show days. This was the second serious wreck in two years. It left in Cody's mind a recurring dread of disaster, as well as grief for the loss of Little Missy after ten years of happy association.

*When it was shown at the Garden, Mark Twain left the house looking "sour as pickle," to show his dislike for the Chinese policy of the government.

The first railway train ran into the Big Horn Basin in November. The town of Cody, which now had a population of a thousand, celebrated with a barbecue, speechmaking and fireworks. Actually there was small cause for rejoicing. Salsbury was commenting upon the "rotten condition of irrigation affairs at Cody," and wrote to his partner:

"You are carrying a lot of 'little' things and a lot of little people in the Big Horn Basin that will eat up every dollar you can get for the rest of your life if you don't get rid of them.

"When I was in the Big Horn Basin I saw your affairs conducted in a way that made me sick to my stomach, and from what I hear they are in no better condition now."

Before the next season began, Cody wrote in gloomy vein to his foster son, Johnny Baker, who, in addition to his shooting act had now become arenic director of the show:

"Although I've had quite a rest I am still very nervous—this is confidential I don't believe I am going to hold out very long—and I want you to be able to take my place."

The 1902 tour was a hard one, with the greatest number of stands he had ever made, taking him clear through to the Pacific Coast. His face was drawn, his fine eyes were sad. His vigor was stressed by Burke: "It is but natural that one whose ideas take form and color from the tame environment and conventional influences of the effete East, or the bloodless pseudo-civilization of the Old World, should find it difficult to believe that the life of one man could really be so full of perilous vicissitudes, hazardous toils and romantic adventures."

They were still quoting General Carr's testimonial,

"Mr. Cody never seems to tire." But Cody was fearfully tired now, and appalled at the thought of the long farewell tour of England that lay before him.

Rumors that gold had been found on his property gave hope of release, but the hope faded. He had completed his hotel at Cody, named after his youngest daughter, Irma. If he only had enough money to get clear of debt, he could be an innkeeper again and take his ease. Always he had a hankering for inn-keeping. As a bridegroom at twenty he had opened a hotel and failed because he was too bountiful a host. For a little while he had kept the tavern near Hays. Some of his first wealth he had invested in the inn at Sheridan. The hotel Irma here in the mountains might now save him from gallivanting about the globe. He made an attempt to sell his interest in the Wild West and let Johnny Baker or some one else play his part; naturally he found no takers.

Nate Salsbury, sick himself, tried earnestly to cheer up the disheartened head-liner. He wrote in October:

My dear Cody:

. . . We cannot regulate the universe and we must get along with as little of friction and worry as possible if we care to stay on earth much longer. You complain of the worry and work in the Wild West. I understand it perfectly, for I carried the load for ten years without an hour's vacation from the job, and I know what it means, but I could not help myself and tried to take it as philosophically as possible, and succeeded pretty well if I do say so. . . .

Yours.

NATE SALSBUURY.

That was the last recorded letter to Cody from his

partner, who was too ill to go with the show when it sailed for England, where it was to open the day after Christmas, 1902.

Nate Salsbury died on Christmas Eve at his home in New Jersey.

When the news was cabled to Cody and Bailey at London, they debated whether they ought to open. They decided that Salsbury, gallant trouper and thoroughbred showman that he was, would have wanted his show to open on its date. So it did, with the flag on the grounds lowered to half-mast and the banner carried by the cavalry draped with crape.

It might reasonably be maintained that, although Cody was held up before all the world as the archetype of American manhood, it was Nate Salsbury who fitted more closely the world's idea of a typical American of his period—versatile, inventive, hustling, devoted to his business, courageous in adversity and shrewd in prosperity.

Utterly unlike as the two men were, there was a chemical affinity between them. Cody with his fame, his beauty, his skill in exhibition, his pliability and his charm in intercourse acted upon Salsbury's imaginative mind. Salsbury with his showmanship and energy and stability acted upon Cody to build a Buffalo Bill more substantial than the creation of the novelists and to develop a Wild West Show that was no mere assembly of features, but a homogeneous, living American drama.

When Salsbury died, the ferment stopped. Something was gone that was never thereafter to be replaced. The disintegration of the Wild West began almost at once, and with it, the long tragedy of the decline of Buffalo Bill.

CHAPTER XXVI

FAREWELLS

WITH the bearded Venus, the human ostrich, the man with a giraffe neck and a score of other freaks, Buffalo Bill was dragged about Europe for four seasons, against his desires and at heavy loss. Circus features hurt the integrity of the original Wild West and circus policies cost Cody probably two hundred thousand dollars.

Bailey kept the show abroad during those four losing years, largely to hold it out of competition with his circus at home. In this he was well within his rights, for in the complex transaction by which the Salsbury stock was taken over, he first became Cody's partner and before long practically controlled the show, holding a lien against Cody's interest and his note for money borrowed.

The European circus plant was rented as physical equipment for the Wild West. The old Deadwood coach was now too shaky to whirl about the arena, and a duplicate was used. The company included eight hundred people, at an expense too great for any conceivable receipts.

Cody always insisted that Bailey had made an oral promise not to call upon him for any part of the losses that might be incurred in Europe. But before the tour ended, Bailey died and his estate forced Cody to pay.

The 1903 season had begun well enough. Cody's old friend Edward, now become king, watched several performances and gave him a diamond pin. But on the very first day of the outdoor tenting season, in April, Cody was thrown from his horse and was unable to ride

for three weeks. It was an evil omen. Wretched weather pursued him throughout England. When the show was put into winter quarters in October, he came home in ugly humor.

He sued his wife for divorce. The grounds were that she had tried to poison him and that they were incompatible, as shown by her refusal to entertain the friends he used to bring to their home.

To his daughter Arta, who had just been married, this news spelled tragedy. "Oh, papa!" she wrote to her mother. "Why did he do it? My heart is just broken over it." Three days later she died.

In her grief Mrs. Cody cried that Arta had been killed by her own father. This cruel accusation made the breach wider yet. At the funeral in Rochester, reconciliation was offered, but Cody would have none of it. He went back to England for another dreary season, at the end of which he announced that he might buy an estate in France and end his days there.

He returned in the spring of 1905 when the divorce case came to trial.

"What's the matter with Buffalo Bill?" asked the bolder newspapers. One of them, reporting that when seen in his usual haunts about New York he had, although quite sober, talked scandalously about his wife and other people, asked, "Is Cody in his right mind?"

To his charges Mrs. Cody replied that she had not tried to poison him, nor had she poisoned his valuable hounds, as he also alleged. She had, she said, always been a true and loving wife. In early days when her husband had failed to give her money, she had taken in sewing to support their family, and he had even borrowed from her money thus earned and had not repaid it. She had been kind and considerate to his friends, but some of

THE MAKING OF BUFFALO BILL

the people he had brought to her house, both male and female, were a fast and riotous set, to whom she had every right to object. She still loved him, she was proud of him, to her he was still "Willy," she wanted him back above all else. "Will is one of the kindest and most generous men I ever knew. When he was sober he was always considerate and gentle. If I had him to myself now, there would be no trouble. His environments have caused him to put this upon me."

Witnesses swore that the young woman of whom she had long been jealous had continued to travel with Cody, and that he had even built special quarters for her at his Wyoming ranch. "I suppose Will wants a young wife," said Louisa, "one who will bear him an heir, as our son is dead."

That he longed for a son to carry on his name and his work was perhaps close to the real truth. For not long after the divorce had been denied, Cody wrote a fond and sad letter to his foster son, Johnny Baker:

I cannot express my feelings to you in words for you are too near and dear to my heart. For twenty-three years you have never once failed me. No father ever had a son more loving and faithful. You have done as much to make Buffalo Bill's Wild West what it is, as I have myself. You have been with it from its inception, and filled nearly every capacity in it. I would not be able to go on with it now without you.

God bless you, my son.

W. F. CODY.

He had to play two more seasons on the Continent. Inexorable ill luck dogged him. Glanders broke out among the horses in France. The man who had loved

horses all his life saw three hundred led out, one bunch after another, to be shot down, the keen racers and buckers as well as the heavy Percherons that hauled the wagons. At last, to check the epidemic, even the healthy remnant had to go, and their bright trappings were burned with their bodies. That was an incident of which Burke made no publicity.

When Bailey died in 1906 Cody found himself for the first time without a partner on whom to depend. One by one he had lost the men who had provided the showman's genius for him—first Buntline, then Salisbury, and now Bailey.

True, he still had the loyal Burke, to do a thousand tasks and between them to sing his praises in every newspaper office. He had Johnny Baker to play his part when he could not go on, and to wrestle with his tangled finances morning and night. Baker and Burke were the only two who began with the Wild West and stayed with it until the end, never failing in their devotion to their chief. Audaciously the publicity came to refer to Cody and Baker and Burke as "the three guardsmen, all for one and one for all."

Two old men and one sturdy young man stood firm together, and endured the blows of fate. And Buffalo Bill was the most valiant of them all as he swung into the saddle for the opening at Madison Square Garden in the spring of 1907—sixty-one and still with his foot in the stirrup.

"It took a brave, brave man to miss as many glass balls as he did last night and still smile and look happy," wrote Acton Davies the next morning.

It took a brave man to fight back when there was a raking-up of the old scandal about his relations with Katherine Clemmons, who had married Howard Gould

and was now seeking a separation. Gould alleged that before their marriage Katherine's relations with Cody had been "criminal and meretricious." Cody alleged that Gould offered him fifty thousand dollars to testify against Katherine, which he scornfully refused, while he threatened to sue for some of the money he had squandered on her in the effort to make her a stage star.

It took a brave man to see most of the profits of his first good season in five years taken away from him to reimburse the Bailey estate.

It took a brave man to sit down with Burke and turn out articles and still another book about the exploits of his youth. "I work every day in my tent," he said, "and two hours before I leave my private car I spend with my secretary, dictating. That's the way I write stories. Sit down and talk them off as you would tell them to a friend." One hardly blames him for enacting in the show now his highly improbable victory over Tall Bull and for letting Burke write into *True Tales* some of the wilder adventures that had been invented for him, and which in more light-hearted days he had ridiculed.

The burden of responsibility bore heavily upon him. "Tired as I am," he said, "I have to see to so much that I should not be called upon to do." It seemed as though every time a horse was sick they came rushing to him about it. Men were always getting hurt. The one-day stands became a permanent nightmare. Wheedling and brow-beating railway officials to get the special train through to the next town on time. Jolting over bad tracks night after night. Switching off on a siding at hot noontime, unloading the horses on picket line, feeding men and stock and loading again to complete the run. Setting up the big top in gales, when for minutes at a time great sheets of canvas would be in the air, snapping

angrily. Finding towns stripped of cash by a circus traveling a few days ahead, or whole sections depressed by crop failures. And over and over again, rain, malevolent rain, to drench the outfit, turn the lot into a swamp and drive away the audiences to boot.

Little wonder that his hair became not only snow-white, but so thin that he had to have a toupee made, thick on top and combed into the long locks which were his trade-mark.*

Little wonder that his shooting got worse and worse, until it was reported that an inventor had come to him with a proposal to make glass balls which would burst in the air when his rifle went off, whether he hit them or not. "I began as a sure shot," cried Buffalo Bill, for publication, "and I guess I won't finish as a faker!"

Relief came from an unlooked-for direction, late in 1908. Major Gordon Lillie bought the Bailey interests in the show. Sentiment as well as business shaped the deal, for Lillie had been a charter member of the Wild West. It was he who had gathered its first band of Pawnees and who had served with it for a time as interpreter. His show had long been a competitor, and lately a successful one as "Pawnee Bill's Far East."

Lillie had been canny while Cody had been hoodwinked, thrifty while Cody had been prodigal. He was able to finance the combined shows and let Cody recover his half-ownership out of earnings. Cody's spirits rose with all their old buoyancy. "It's a pretty good old show to tie to," he exclaimed.

But the Wild West was still further diluted by mix-

*Burke's efforts to account for the wig may have inspired the newspaper story that a stupid barber had shorn Cody's whole head before he knew it, and that as he saw scattered on the floor the silver locks that no Indian had ever been able to lift, he murmured, "They've got me at last!"

ture with a spectacle of the Far East. "The Occident meets the Orient in Gorgeous Pageantry, Pomp, and Procession. The Red Men of two hemispheres ride side by side and many nations contribute Man and Beast to a Triumphal March of the Ethnological Congress." Trained elephants, Hindu fakirs, Australian boomerang throwers, Singhalese and Japanese dancers had little to do with an epitome of pioneer America and a Congress of Rough Riders.

The first season of the combination was not promising. Profits were less than one hundred thousand dollars. This was not enough for Cody's needs. For he had been talked into buying some oil lands and some mines in Arizona where he hoped to find gold, silver, copper, lead and tungsten.

He prevailed upon Lillie to spend more on the show. He wanted to go out with the finest spectacle he had ever had. An inspiration had struck him. He would begin a long and brilliant tour of farewell.

"The time has come," said his valedictory, "for parting words to the friends of my lifetime and my best patron, the American Public. Time beats us all at last. Few remain of the great leaders in war and peace, many of whom came out of the West,—the West of the old pioneer days,—the Wild West, with which all my life has been so closely interwoven. Now, as I am nearing the three score and ten limit, the warning comes that the years are lurking in ambush for Buffalo Bill, who must prepare to retire in good order from the arena, or take the chances of being left 'to lag superfluous on the stage.' "

The plan was a three-year route which would take him to every corner of the country without doubling on his tracks or appearing twice in any one place, so that he

could say, as he did, "*On my honor as Buffalo Bill, my present visit will positively be my last hail and farewell in the saddle, to you all.*"

His sense of being an old man was heightened when his granddaughter married. Soon afterward a telegram came from his grandson begging him to come to North Platte for a holiday. He went, to be greeted by his wife after nine years of estrangement. The family left them in a room together. When they came out the past had been forgiven. Two hundred and fifty neighbors were invited in to celebrate the reunion; a committee sent a telegram to a New York paper saying: "The citizens of North Platte assembled at Scout's Rest Ranch send greetings. . . . We are enjoying the evening with our friend and foremost citizen, Col. W. F. Cody. We are all happy at his return. . . ." Louisa went north with her husband to the Wyoming ranch house where she had never before been welcome.

When Buffalo Bill said on his honor that he was bidding them farewell, his public took him at his word. During 1910 the show "packed 'em in and turned 'em away." It was his last great season; the takings were a million, the profits more than four hundred thousand dollars.

He poured every dollar into his mines and into the Big Horn Basin, and had to borrow his share of the expense of putting out the show the next spring. But he was again in sanguine mood. As a mine owner in Arizona, which was about to be admitted as a state, he rather thought he might be sent to the Senate. "I have always had a hankering to go to Congress. Arizona does not care how I stand on public questions so long as I am able to shoot straight." Asked if he was for reciprocity, he replied with a laugh, "Yes, whatever that is.

Put me down as being for everything." And when the reporter inquired, "How do you stand on conservation?" he cried, "Just a second and I'll show you." Diving into his bag he brought forth a bottle. "Here's something I've been conserving for years. What'll you have?"

Business fell off in 1911 and profits were cut almost in half. Cody began to feel that rival shows were showing more drive, were getting better Indians and better features.

With dismay he learned that the route for next year would take him back to many places in which he had already said his solemn farewell. Must he go there again? He must, for the sake of the gate receipts. Well, the exact words of his pledge had been that he was saying farewell "from the saddle." Perhaps he could appear in those places, not on horseback, but in a phaeton. He longed to be freed from the saddle, and from the grind of constant travel and one-day stands.

"For twenty-eight years," he wrote to a friend, "I have hammered one spot daily until the spot has grown too sore to stand it any longer. I am nervous and oh! so tired. Every cloud in the sky, every time the wind flaps my tent or shakes the big top, it gets on my nerves. At night every hard stop or start of the cars I think it's a wreck. . . . I have just got to break away from this strain or die.

"This season has told on me more than ever. Just the thought that I have got to be at every performance, sick or well, has gotten onto my nerves. I have put in many hard years at it, and I don't care neither do my friends want to see me die in the arena."

He laid out for himself an ideal routine. In the large cities he would visit with the newspaper men, hold a reception, mingle with the people, and during the show,

"appear in my high spider with a fine pair of horses, circle around the arena, bowing; then take the center of the arena and make a speech." In small towns he would not appear at all. This would give him respite to run out to look after his irrigation and his mines.

The mines needed attention. Johnny Baker, visiting one of them, had found only four men working where there were thirty-six names on the pay-roll. An expert had reported that there was ore in sight worth three million dollars. They were putting in new machinery, hoists, a gravity railroad and a water-system. Cody was sure he could sell stock to some of his rich friends.

"Won't it be kind of nice," he said, "to have a show that runs night and day and Sundays and the year round, eh? No long winters at a heavy expense and nothing coming in. No rain to knock us out, no winds to blow us to ribbons and injure people. No railroad accidents. No one to kick, for we take our money from Nature's treasury vaults."

It could not be. Lillie insisted that he continue to ride and shoot as he had always done. The profits for 1912 dropped again to one hundred and twenty-three thousand dollars.

That Christmas he spent with Baker at Campo Bonita, Arizona. There he gave a party for children whom he gathered from twenty miles around. Playing Santa Claus in a long beard as white as his wig, he passed what was perhaps his last genuinely happy day. He caught a cold from which he never wholly recovered. And a few days later, in Denver, he was making a contract with a man who was to prove a hard taskmaster.

That man was H. H. Tammen, who with Fred Bonfils owned the *Denver Post* and the Sells-Floto Circus. Handsome, jolly, glad-handing Tammen had carried over

from his bartending days a habit of digging into his pocket for cash to give to any panhandler or to lend to any hard-up acquaintance. In larger matters of business, however, he could drive a tight bargain.

Tammen gave Cody twenty thousand dollars, taking a six months' note with the property of the Wild West as collateral. But there was a further and a fateful consideration. Cody signed an agreement to leave the show that bore his own name and travel with the Sells-Floto Circus, a year hence. In his dire need, Buffalo Bill had come to that.

The mines that were to make him rich had failed him. His farewell tour was ended, and although he had said a last good-by to millions of people in hundreds of places, he must take the road again. "Those farewells acted as a boomerang," he said. "If I went on like an old played-out mule, how quick the public would drop me." Yet he must go on. He would stay with Pawnee Bill through 1913. Then he would let Lillie have Buffalo Bill's Wild West, while he himself appeared with an alien circus.

Looking ahead to that illogical situation, Lillie decided to take Cody's place as star performer during 1913. This suited Cody, for it gave him release from the saddle at last. He appeared, as he had wished, in his phaeton to introduce the performance, and shot no more at the glass balls.

They made the mistake of going south. There they ran into unseasonable cold and freezing rains. They found lots flooded and lost their stands for several days. Twice in a little more than a week their canvas was blown down. They were billed through country prostrated by cheap cotton. "We don't see anybody but broke niggers," said Cody. At one matinée, on a beautiful day, the receipts were only seven dollars and fifteen cents.

He was ill. So was Colonel Dyer, his mining associate, and Cody was on Dyer's note. The men at the mines were unpaid and the property had to be offered for sale. There were no takers. Yet at the end of a long letter in which he recited these reverses, he could still write, "Let's look on the bright side."

For one hundred successive stands the show lost money. By the time they came into Denver in July, it was clear that a crisis was at hand. Tammen's note was overdue; so also were notes which had been given to the lithographers for posters.

Sixty-five thousand dollars would save the show. Lillie had plenty of money. For a long time he had patiently paid the losses. Now, disheartened by the knowledge that Cody was going to leave him in any case, he declined to pay any more.

Cody hoped that Tammen might buy the whole outfit, including the rolling stock and draft horses, which belonged to Lillie and Tom Smith and were only leased by the show. Another proposal was to put the show in the hands of a receiver and, with expenses reduced, send it into the Canadian Northwest, virgin territory where Buffalo Bill had never been seen.

Tammen, however, was not only a creditor; he also held a contract making him Buffalo Bill's boss for next year. All he needed now was the right to use with his circus the title "Buffalo Bill's Wild West." Then he could send his own combination into Canada with Buffalo Bill as the star. Joining forces with the lithographers, Tammen brought an attachment.

The sheriff's men came on the lot. Cody saw them and sent Tom Smith running to the treasury wagon to save the few thousand dollars there. But the invaders got there first and seized every dollar. "It broke my

heart," said Cody, "that we could not pay our people."

The news that the Wild West was closed by the sheriff was flashed throughout an astonished nation. An old friend in the East hurried to a telegraph office and wired five hundred dollars to Cody, who promptly gave almost all of it to "our dear stranded people." A reporter from Tammen's paper, none too well paid himself, shyly slipped into the old man's hand a check for one hundred and twenty-five dollars, whispering, "I wish it were more, Colonel."

The equipment was sold at auction. When they led to the block the white horse, Isham, who had borne Cody under the spotlight in many an arena, a Nebraska man stood in the crowd and bid persistently. As the price rose, one of the rival bidders muttered, "I can't go much further, but if the man who buys that horse don't give him back to Colonel Cody I'll steal the horse tonight and take it back to him." Isham was knocked down to the loyal Nebraskan for a hundred and fifty dollars and shipped to the TE ranch.

Thus ingloriously Buffalo Bill's Wild West died, in the crying of petty sums and the harsh taps of the auctioneer's hammer. Thirty years it had lived, the first fifteen in soaring splendor, the last in waning bravado. Both Cody and Lillie knew that its death was no mere accident of fortune. Time had flown past and left its gaudy wagons creaking along a forgotten trail. That brisk new amusement, which had given its first warning flicker in Edison's peep-show machines, two decades before, was now flaunting its silver screen in every village.

"The show business isn't what it used to be," Cody sighed. Lillie, agreeing, quit for good, glad to retire to his quiet ranch in Oklahoma and live on the fortune he had saved. Buffalo Bill, owning two ranches, a hotel,

two roadhouses, two mines and many acres of land, had nothing paying, everything mortgaged, and debts pressing. He could not quit. Fleeing to the Big Horn Basin to rest and think, he did not for a moment yield to panic or despair. "I have to start life over again," he said, "with no capital."

CHAPTER XXVII

UNDER THE BIG TOP

AFTER the turmoil, the Big Horn Basin was a haven of peace. In all the years Cody had owned the TE ranch, he had never before seen it in the summer-time. His cattle and horses were rolling in fat; the hay and barley and oats and potatoes were abundant. His Irma Hotel was doing fairly well; he felt sure it would pay next year. His wife was at the ranch and she comforted him. "Yesterday Mother and I went out and gathered two bushels of wild gooseberries. We put a table cover under the vines and then with sticks knock the vines."

Bucolic life was pleasant for a few days. But, he said, "my brain is too active for a ranch man." He must be doing something to make money. To Johnny Baker he wrote proposing one scheme after another, though he generously urged his foster son not to feel tied to him. "I don't want to stand in your way, my boy," he wrote, adding in the Indian phrase, "My medicine is rotten."

Vaudeville managers wired him offers which he refused. One was from London where they would pay twenty-five hundred dollars a week for himself, a girl rider and a shooter; boldly he replied that he would take not less than five thousand dollars a week. A motion-picture proposal was forwarded by Tammen, who signed himself "with love and good cheer." He rejected the offer as not good enough, but it started a train of thought.

If the movies had killed the show business, he could go into movies himself. He might make the TE ranch a headquarters for producing western films. He could

create a great picture of the Indian fights in which he had figured—the duel with Yellow Hand, the battle of Summit Springs and the killing of Tall Bull, the Ghost Dance uprising, the death of Sitting Bull, the slaughter at Wounded Knee. At last the idea came clear—an accurate historical film preserving for posterity the last Indian war, taken on the ground at Pine Ridge with Indians and soldiers who had actually participated. His friend General Miles would be glad to take part.

Moving with great energy, he went to Denver and saw Tammen and Bonfils. They agreed to help. The secretary of war happened to visit Denver; Cody got himself appointed on the reception committee and came back with permission to use regular cavalry in the film. The secretary of the interior was at Colorado Springs; Cody went there and got permission to make the picture at Pine Ridge and to employ agency Indians.

"Cody, you are a wonder," said Tammen. They joined with the Essanay Film Company in forming the W. F. Cody Historical Pictures Company. Cody received one-third of the stock without putting up any money. "Now that I have financial backing I'll do something," he said in high glee. "It does look like my luck has turned."

Within three months after the closing of his show he was at Pine Ridge with Miles and five other generals, three troops of cavalry and hundreds of Indians. Such veterans of the Wild West as Short Bull and No Neck reported for work. Tepees were ranged all along Wounded Knee Creek. Papooses played about the huge grave in which the frozen bodies of their grandfathers had been thrown. Squaws renewed their mourning. An itinerant merry-go-round came along and raised their spirits with its tinkling music and its gaudy horses, which

the warriors straddled and rode as earnestly as if they were on fleet ponies chasing the foe on the open plain.

The Indians were difficult at first. "It's harder to organize and run than three circuses," said Cody. Fortunately he had Baker as his right-hand man. To reproduce the Wounded Knee fight would disturb the Indians who were buried on the hill. Baker made one of the disgruntled spokesmen a captain and the other a colonel, and persuaded them that their ancestors would be proud of their success in moving pictures. He pointed out that the film would set the Indian right before the public by showing that the outbreak at Wounded Knee had not been an Indian plot.

Alarming reports went round. Some of the young bucks were going to exhort the whole band, when it put on war feathers for the sham fight, to use bullets instead of blank cartridges, to make a real slaughter in belated revenge for what white soldiers had done on that spot a generation ago. Buffalo Bill summoned the chiefs, read them a midnight lecture and stopped that nonsense.

General Miles was difficult too. Taking the job very seriously, he insisted upon literal truth. No incident which had not actually been part of his 1890 campaign could be pictured. There had been eleven thousand troops in the field; all must be shown. So the three hundred cavalrymen present were marched past the cameras forty times; the General was not informed that after the first few repeats the lens was closed. Nor would he approve the picture unless the whole outfit were taken into the Bad Lands, miles away, in order to stage events which had originally occurred there, although the scenes might just as well have been filmed near the camp.

At last the job was done. In spite of all his worries, Cody kept up a bold front in public. When he turned up in Washington, the reporters described him as full of

ginger, straight as an arrow and ruddy of face. "While my show has been in winter quarters," he said, counting on the fact that no one would remember that no vestige of his show remained, "I have been supervising the taking of moving pictures on the plains. I have yet a great life work before I hit the last trail. I am in splendid health and have spent practically all of last fall and winter in the saddle."

In the spring he borrowed twenty-five hundred dollars from a Denver bank, with Tammen endorsing his note, and started out with the Sells-Floto Circus.

It was a twenty-five-cent admission show; the great Buffalo Bill and a whole circus for only twenty-five cents! His wage was one hundred dollars a day, besides which he was to have forty per cent. of the receipts from all sources above three thousand dollars.

In spite of the pledge of his farewell tour, he had to mount the saddle again. "Buffalo Bill salutes from the saddle," said the advertisements. He rode in on horseback to introduce the show as his only appearance in the arena, and led the parades in his buggy. That was all; no shooting, no galloping rescue of the stage-coach, no battles with Indians.

One service which he performed whenever possible was to hurry ahead of the circus to the next stand, meet the newspaper men, visit with the Elks and the Masons, drop in at the Chamber of Commerce and otherwise drum up business. This was hard work, compelling him to ride on sleeping-cars night after night, instead of in the comparative comfort of a private car in the show train. His expense account mounted until it was more than a thousand dollars, which Tammen refused to pay.

Cody decided that he was with a cheap sort of show. "I am sick of this twenty-five cent gag," he said.

It was a hot season. Cody was sick with neuritis and

rheumatism. Though there were many days when he should have been in bed, he never missed a parade or a performance. He could not afford to. He had to draw his pay for days ahead to stand off his creditors.

Johnny Baker had gone to London to shoot in the Anglo-American Exhibition. Although the separation was a severe blow to Cody, he hoped that Johnny could arrange for British showings of the Indian war films.

Colonel Dyer was dead, but there was promise of paying ore at the mines. Cody wanted to buy a new mill, invented by Edison for handling low grade ores, and get a "permanent life job." He was even sanguine of recovering some of the money he had been forced to pay to the Bailey estate, which was in litigation.

After the last show, in Texas in mid-October, he went to pieces. They put him on a through train, and he did not leave his drawing-room until it reached Denver, where his brother-in-law took care of him.

Tammen wanted to see him about a new contract. The doctor warned him that he was in no condition to transact business. Unwisely, however, he went to Tammen and put his name to a paper which he later said he had not understood. It provided that next year he should get his percentage on daily receipts above thirty-one hundred instead of three thousand dollars. This would reduce his possible earnings by forty dollars a day.

He went to recuperate at his ranch. "I have improved wonderfully," he wrote, "so much so that last night about nine o'clock I went out in the field where the deer are eating up my alfalfa and by moonlight killed a big buck deer." There spoke the proud old marksman. At hog-killing he used his .22 caliber rifle to such good effect that, as he said with delight, "the boys nicknamed me Hog Bill."

But he could not spend the winter in idleness. "I must be doing something to keep from thinking and worrying." The Indian pictures had paid him little. He had the right to use a set of the reels, but refused an offer to appear in vaudeville houses with them, for eight hundred dollars a week. "I won't work for that," he said.

He got a typewriter and tried to make a start on his final autobiography, sending word to eastern publishers that with Burke's help he could finish it in three weeks.

With the great war begun in Europe, he knew that interest in things military would revive. Some Broadway theater ought to want his films, with an Indian museum in the lobby, and himself and Short Bull lecturing from the stage. He wanted to take Short Bull and other Indians to Washington to have a peace talk with the President as publicity. In England he believed he could get the endorsement of "my friend King George." He sent the precious scalp of Yellow Hand to Tammen to be photographed for publicity use, and hunted for the bowie-knife with which he had ended his famous duel.

Nearer home, he planned a dude ranch. He knew of one that was making forty thousand dollars a season. There were a hundred and fifty dudes there all the time. The store alone paid the whole expense, for the dudes were great spenders. Only a quarter of a mile from TE was the Bob Cat ranch, which he had acquired from his sister. It was in the timber, a beautiful place for hunting, fishing, riding and dressing up in Wild West costume. There were on the place two good houses with all modern conveniences, but of course the dudes would prefer to sleep out in tents, and wash in open basins.

Why not raise one hundred thousand dollars among his rich friends to combine a dude ranch with the De-Maris Springs near by, build another hotel and make

sure money? Johnny Baker could be general manager. The location was perfect, within striking distance of Yellowstone Park on horseback.

Four miles west of Cody arose the grandeur of the thousand foot canyon and the lofty Shoshone Dam. The Cody Trail was a wonder in itself. Louis Cooke said that when some one tried to discourage its construction by the government, arguing that nothing but a bird could get into the Park over those mountains, President Roosevelt had said, "My old friend Buffalo Bill has hit the trail up there, and if he was good enough to guide such men as Sherman, Sheridan, Carr, Custer and Miles with their armies through uncivilized regions, I would take chances on building a road into the middle of eternity on his statement, and Bill says it is all right, as he has been over it on horseback." You could start from the Irma Hotel, with a hearty good-by from the bartenders and Buffalo Bill himself, stop half-way to the Park for refreshments at Buffalo Bill's Wapita Inn, and spend the night just outside the entrance at Pahaska Tepee, a picturesque log house also owned by Buffalo Bill. Add a dude ranch and healing springs and Buffalo Bill would indeed be the prince of the Rockies.

Failing that, he had high hope of selling his mines for two hundred thousand dollars and paying all his debts. To Johnny Baker, returned from abroad to put a stout shoulder to the wheel again, he gave power of attorney with authority to transact all business in his place and stead.

By the spring of 1915 he had hoped himself into better health than he had known for years, or so he thought; he could "fight a buzz saw."

Then began a season of mental torture. "Tammen doesn't know a thing about the show business," he said.

They had cut the circus down one-third and doubled the admission price without advertising the fact, so that people did not know until they were on the lot that they would have to pay fifty cents. "I call it the most gigantic graft ever attempted by a show," stormed Cody. "I won't be a party to this proposed robbery." He warned the press agents not to use his name or picture. The staff of the circus, he thought, was robbing the owners. Recalling the expense account that Tammen had not paid, and his loss under the new contract which he had signed "under duress," he decided that his employers were cheating him deliberately. "I am sick and nearly crazy," he wrote.

A storm and flood at Fort Madison, Iowa, shook him badly. In heavy rain a swamp near the show grounds overflowed, covering the lot with water to a depth of two feet or more. "We came within five minutes of drowning a thousand women and children," he exclaimed in horror. As he thought it over, it seemed that no one had been in charge. When the cook house was swept away, the gang began to yell and he himself had to run out and quiet them lest they start a stampede in the audience. All but six of the four hundred men with the show ran away, he said. "Four of us carried the babies and helped the women."

The big top was worrying him, because it was two years old and he thought the ropes were rotted. Sooner or later he expected it to fall and kill a lot of people. "I don't want to be arrested for it. The court will say I was and am an experienced showman and should have reported it. I want to go on record as swearing that this big show tent is not safe. I don't wish to be held by law to fulfill my contract, to help draw people into a death trap."

THE MAKING OF BUFFALO BILL

He sat in his tent or in his car and wrote letters for hours at a time, to one person after another who might help him escape from Tammen. His hand was uncertain and his memory faulty; he wrote the same things to the same persons over and over again, and reproached them for not replying more often. He began laying plans for a show of his own. After the war was over, he would organize the greatest military spectacle ever seen. As a grubstake for the coming winter, he wanted to conduct from his Wyoming ranch the greatest hunting party of all time. Well-to-do sportsmen were notified and publicity given out.

He was stunned by a demand from Tammen that he repay the money which he had borrowed more than two years previously, and which he supposed had been cleaned up by the sheriff's sale. Tammen also demanded payment of the twenty-five hundred which he had borrowed last year; this, Cody said, had already been deducted from his salary, but he had never been given the canceled note. The paymaster began to withhold fifty dollars of his wages each day.

He wrote wildly to a friend:

There must be a law to protect me from him robbing me. Ask some good lawyer to stop this. I have stood between savagery and civilization most all my early days. Won't someone who knows the law come to my rescue. God bless you. I am old and tired.

Then followed an almost illegible postscript:

This man is driving me crazy. I can easily kill him but as I avoided killing in the bad days I don't want to kill him. But if there is no justice left I will.



from the Albert Davis Collection

Pawnee Bill and Buffalo Bill



Cody with his wife, the year before his death

It was true that in the "bad days" he had never been a killer. Once, standing at the bar in a North Platte saloon, he had sent a bullet past the ear of a man who had offended him, and who promptly felt through a window. But drunk or sober he had been notably peaceable. No one had ever stirred him to such frenzy as he felt, at the age of sixty-nine, when he summed up his injuries at the hands of Tammen.

Several sturdy supporters got together to send him advice. Although Lillie was now suing him for the money loaned, and he was suing Lillie for an accounting of their old show, the Major tried to help him. Almost daily he appealed for help. Couldn't they get him a good sage-brush lawyer? Must he just "hang and rattle"?

He thought that he might force Tammen by charging criminal negligence, and wrote: "Do you think we could scare him? By that storm and flood at Fort Madison. He had no one in charge of at least 3000 women and children. And he is still using an unsafe top. If your lawyer thinks so I'll throw it into him."

Early in September, Tammen came to Lawrence, Kansas, to talk it all over. Whether because it was hot in the tent, or because he saw danger in the eyes of the old scout, in the gestures of the shaking hand and in the guns that hung so near, Tammen wanted to go outside and walk up and down. "I sit right here," said Cody grimly.

The outcome of their talk was that Tammen refused to pay any of Cody's claims, telling him to sue if he liked, but signed a release permitting him to draw his one hundred dollars a day without deduction.

Thereafter he went every morning to the pay wagon and got his cash. He was persuaded that Tammen was "losing barrels of money to spite me." He said,

"I swear I'll never go out with this show again." At the close of the season he quit Tammen for good, and faced a future with no contract and no income.

The great hunt which he had counted upon had fallen through. In his extremity his mind turned to the painting which Rosa Bonheur had made of him in his prime; he tried to interest a mail-order house in selling prints of it. He heard of some new oil lands, and hastened to stake out claims for himself and one or two friends.

His dearest ambition was to start his own show once again. He visited the 101 Ranch Show, owned by Miller and Arlington. They had just completed a spectacular season featuring the heavyweight champion, Jess Willard, to whom they paid more than one hundred thousand dollars. Willard was through and their show could be bought for sixty-five thousand dollars.

America was stirred by the war in France. "Preparedness" was the cry of the moment. A great military spectacle ought to pay, particularly if it could include some wounded veterans of the Allied armies. Visiting General Scott in Washington, Cody tried to persuade the army to send a recruiting officer out with his proposed show. That was impossible, but he obtained permission to hire soldiers on furlough and plenty of guns and camions. All he needed was cash, and Johnny Baker was scouting for that. But he cautioned, "Don't tie me up for any great length of time, as I am too old." Perhaps Annie Oakley could still shoot and would join him again. Certainly he wanted Lucille Mulhall, who seemed to him the greatest cow-girl on earth.

He sold outright his interest in the Indian war films. A publisher wanted his autobiography and assigned an able collaborator who wrote it while he was in the East. From an acquaintance who was marketing a new sort of canned heat, he obtained the promise of sales

rights for certain western states. He wrote to Baker; "Buck up. I haven't begun to fight yet. We are going to win and don't you let any Blue Devils get into your bonnet. You just be brave like a seventy year old Kid."

Brave men are blessed with brave friends. Adversity, driving hard, only closed up the fighting formation of the old guard—Cody and Baker and Burke. Of Burke, the fat, devoted press agent, as he went about his fruitless little errands, Courtney Ryley Cooper draws a characteristic picture:

"One wintry morning in Denver, I watched him, whiskers flying, threadbare coat pulled tight around his rotund form, set forth to what I knew by experience would be a meager breakfast. But in ten minutes he was back at the circus offices, a copy of the *New York Times* tucked under his arm.

" 'You didn't take long for breakfast, Major,' I said. He grew red-faced.

" 'Well, I—I just decided I didn't want any,' came at last. 'I noticed this *New York Times*, and I just thought I'd see whether it had anything to say about the Colonel. He's in New York now, you know.'

"I bought the Major's breakfast that day. The ten cents with which he had started for his coffee and rolls—had gone upon the altar of his adoration."

Capital could not be found for a new Buffalo Bill show, because Tammen announced that he owned the title, "Buffalo Bill's Original Wild West," and intended to keep on using it. In consideration of five thousand dollars cash he would permit Cody to appear with another show.

The upshot was that instead of Cody buying the 101 Ranch, the 101 Ranch hired Cody and the twenty-four soldiers he had engaged for a Pageant of Preparedness.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE MAGIC OF A NAME

No DIME novelist or press agent ever invented for Buffalo Bill a more courageous act than this—that in his seventy-first year he took up his rifle again, mounted his horse and shot the glass balls.

His new employers advertised him as in the saddle at every performance. The contract required that he appear in the daily street parade, driving his trap, then on horseback lead the entry into the arena, direct the military pageant and do his shooting act. For all that, he said, "I was never happier with any show, not even my own." He had a private tent and car, a valet and a groom to care for his three horses. Johnny Baker was with him once more as arena director and John Burke as personal press agent. To friends he wrote:

These people seemingly can't do enough to make it pleasant for me. If I suggest anything for the betterment of the show it's acted upon at once. . . . I get \$100 handed me every morning. I get one-third from all sources after \$2750 daily and settle every week, don't wait till end of season then get beat out of it. Last week my portion was \$4161.35. Do you think Tammen would ever stood for that? . . .

Well, this is a beautiful morning. The parade starts at 10:30 sharp. . . . They all move as one man—so I must not be late. . . . We are still shipping Tungsten—and I have an oil boom on my Wyoming lands. Everything is booming at Cody. My health and spirits

THE MAGIC OF A NAME

haven't been so good for years. . . . I am climbing for another fortune.

Yours broke or rich.

CODY.

Much of this optimism was forced. Debts crowded him so closely that he signed away his prospective share in the show profits for ready money. This enabled him to get clear of some of his obligations and to send money to his relatives. But with several law suits on his hands, including one against Sells-Floto, his legal expenses were considerable. "I am tired," he said. "I've had a hard fight ever since I had to pay the Bailey estate all that money and which I didn't owe. I should have taken the benefit of the bankruptcy law and let them go to pot. I'll pay every dollar but I've got to have time."

He heard that each holder of the Congressional Medal was entitled to a dole of ten dollars a month. To the man who had made millions, even ten dollars was important money now. He wrote to the adjutant-general:

I am a Congressional Medal of Honor man and I need that ten dollars a month in my business. As it rains all the time. How do I go about to get it? Will you please send me a blank application.

Very truly yours,

WILLIAM F. CODY,

Bill Cody of the old army.

No definite reply came, for at that very time a board of officers was looking askance at every name on the list of medals holders, and preparing to strike off those who, like Cody, had been civilians when the medals were awarded. Happily he was never to hear of that action.

Rain pelted the show all summer. When it did not

rain it was cruelly hot. Earnings dwindled. The letters became dejected: "It seems like I am having more than I can stand. Every day comes new trouble and from every direction. I made up my mind to make a brave fight, and will if God will spare my health." To protect some of his Wyoming property he had to draw salary in advance. Ten days before the season ended he wrote: "I've overdrawn the \$600 this week. And I'll get home broke."

Many a day that autumn they thought he was going to come to the end that he dreaded, death in the arena. Behind the great curtains they helped him into the saddle. He sat there slumped down, waiting his cue. But when Baker snapped out, "Ready, Colonel," he could jerk himself erect, shoulders back, head up. In the noble pose that molded him to his horse, he rode out to face his audience as gaily as ever, to lead the march, to shoot the glass balls, to flourish his sombrero in parting salute. Still holding the pose, he reined his horse backward through the parted curtains, the centaur still. But as the curtains swung between him and the crowd, he fell forward in the saddle with a groan, and Baker would be there to catch him and help him to the ground. Day after day it happened so. He held out to the last.

On November 11, 1916, he made his final public appearance, at Portsmouth, Virginia. Still planning for a show that would be his own, he was off to Chicago to raise one hundred thousand dollars. Despairing at last of his rich friends, he opened negotiations with a professional money raiser who would work on ten per cent. commission. The stock was to be sold to the general public through advertising in the newspapers. He had faith in himself and in his name.

Suddenly, however, the weary body and mind failed.

Early in January he was taken to the home of his younger sister, in Denver. There he hovered for a few days, part of the time in delirium. When the doctor told him he had only thirty-six hours to live, he asked: "Do you really think it's that bad?"

"Yes."

"Well," he said, turning to his brother-in-law, "let's forget about it and play high-five."

On one of his last days Chauncey Thomas interviewed him. They talked of Wild Bill and Frank North and other heroes and friends of his youth, of his buffalo hunts, the guns he had used, his duel with Yellow Hand. The shooting of the scouts and plainsmen, including his own, had been overrated, he said. "All of them today—the best shots, I mean—could beat us old-timers every time. But we did the work all the same. We had to."

Thomas described the good-by: "The old scout was in pajamas and slippers, and over them was drawn a house coat. . . . Just the man himself standing there, waxen pale, his silver hair flowing down over his straight, square shoulders, his hand out in the last farewell. . . . It was the last time. I knew it; he knew it; we all knew it. But on the surface not a sign."

On January 10, 1917, he died, in bed and not in the arena as he had feared. In all except the literal sense he died with his boots on.

His wife and daughter were with him. The one person he most wanted to see was his foster son, upon whom he depended to carry forward his show and his tradition if not his name. Baker had been in New York, striving as always to find capital, to sell the mines, to arrange contracts for moving pictures, for vaudeville engagements or for a new Wild West. He hurried west but could not come in time.

THE MAKING OF BUFFALO BILL

Six weeks later, in Washington, the second of the old guardsmen died. John Burke dropped his sword only when he knew that his work was done and the time had come to surrender.

If ever a man died of a broken heart, it was John Burke.

The body of Cody lay in state in the capitol at Denver.

There was a great funeral in the lodge room of the Elks' Home. In the cortège that wound through the streets of Denver, seventy cowboys walked, two of them leading a riderless white horse with pistols hung from the saddle horn.

A week afterward advertisements made it known that the Buffalo Bill show would continue. There was no Buffalo Bill show—not a pony or a wagon or a tent, nothing but the title, rented to the 101 Ranch for a small sum. But there was Johnny Baker, billed as "the new King of the Wild West and heir to Buffalo Bill's name." This was not presumption; it was as Cody himself had long wished it to be.

Hiding his grief, Baker played the rôle through one summer, until the movements of the show train were stopped by the wartime embargoes. The greatest of all wars engulfed America, too late for the old warrior.

His debts went on. Years after his death the estate was still in a tangle. His will was only a bit of paper leaving everything to his wife. Everything was barely enough to care for her until she died in 1921 and was buried beside him.

After a time his body was taken from the vault and borne in a long procession of motor-cars up the steep slopes of Lookout Mountain to a grave hewn in the rocks—in the words of the funeral oration, "overlooking

the vast plains which he helped to subdue and make habitable." A battery fired a salute of eleven guns, and the long notes of taps echoed on the peaks.

When an agitation was begun to remove the body to Wyoming, Johnny Baker had the coffin encased in steel and concrete, while a Denver paper flung out the challenge, under a forceful cartoon, "They shall not move him from the resting place he chose."

But the spirit of Buffalo Bill could not be confined in space or time. It broods not only over the promontory on the margin of the prairies where he chased the buffalo, but also over the Big Horn Basin where he pioneered and skylarked.

Wyoming celebrates his birthday each February. In the town which he founded he rides for ever on a horse of bronze, and where the Cody Trail winds off toward the Yellowstone stands a replica of the TE ranch house.

More than a decade after his death the name of Buffalo Bill still has magic to draw the crowds.

Each springtime still a Buffalo Bill show takes the road. Many a small boy in many a small town stands enthralled before the bright posters that tell him the Wild West is coming to him. But the boys' fathers and grandfathers shake their heads and sigh.

Two hundred Buffalo Bill novels sell briskly, though they cost fifteen cents now. Films of Buffalo Bill's Indian fights still show in the movie houses. Motorists whiz up the road to Pahaska Tepee, the memorial building erected by his grave. There in glass cases they see his gigantic boots, his gay jackets, his silver-mounted saddles and bridles, his guns. Old-timers come to chat about the "Colonel" with Johnny Baker who, loyal to the last, presides there and provides hospitable refreshment for thousands of pilgrims.

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Railway advertisements lure travelers into the Buffalo Bill country. Dudes go to the ranches in increasing numbers. In the shops of Cody they earnestly try on and buy the chaps and sombreros and lariats which entitle them to play for a little while at being rough riders of the West.

And each July dudes and old-timers alike flock to the Cody Stampede—when the cowboys of the basin put on their loudest shirts and come jingling in for a frolic of roping, stake racing, bulldogging and bronco busting, to keep alive memories of the days that Buffalo Bill made glamorous.

THE END

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